

165 DAYS

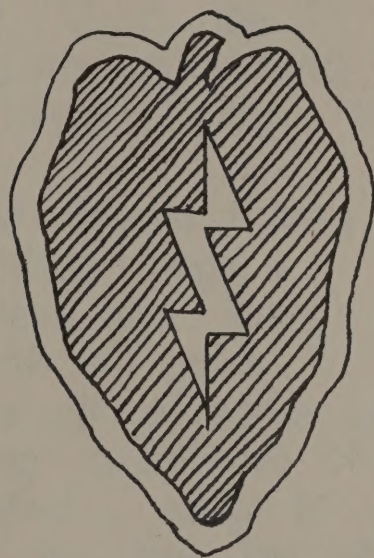


25th Division on Luzon

by

William de Jarnette Rutherford

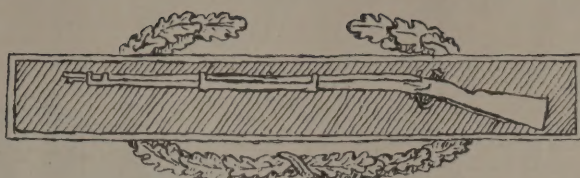
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A story of the 25th Division on Luzon

by

William de Jarnette Rutherfoord



FOREWORD

To my way of thinking, an infantryman in combat is the only soldier who is fully equipped to comprehend the nature of that infamous scourge called "War." Therefore, it is to him that this book is dedicated in all humility.

Having got permission from my commander, I took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Luzon Campaign to follow our doughboys to the battlefield, and record their lives there.

My desire to do this came from the fact that I have seen reproductions of a large number of "war pictures" which were done by competent artists, but which lacked an intimate understanding of their principal subject, "G.I. Joe." To paint life, one must understand it, and to understand it, one must "live." Therefore, by the same token, I say, to paint a soldier, one must be a soldier.

I have dug latrines, and cleaned them; "pulled" K.P., and helped build roads through bottomless jungle. I have "policed up" cigarette butts, beer bottles, and leaves all the way across the Pacific, and got drunk in "pubs." I have been enraged by the highhanded arrogance of some of our officers, and inspired by the unassuming excellence of others. At times, I have wished I were dead, only to snap out of it a little later, and be intoxicated by the joy of living. I have spent years at the old Army games of "hurry up and wait", and "move it over there, then move it back again", while small boys called me "Joe." In other words, I am a "G.I." and this is how the Luzon Campaign looked to me.

Many of my sketches were actually done under fire, while some had to be done from memory, because of such things as rain, darkness, and the violence of sudden, unexpected actions. I hate a lie and therefore, if anything of importance has been left out of my story, it is because I did not see it.

William de Jarnette Rutherford

Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division
September, 1945



On the 11th of January, 1945, we headed for shore,

2



and landed at Lingayen Beach on the island of Luzon.



We found that unloading was still hard work,



but our equipment was a far cry from Guadalcanal.



We worked day and night, stopping only for air raids,



which prompted the feverish digging of fox holes.



On passing through San Fabian, we had our first view
of a demolished town,



Rotherford-45

and stopping to rest along the way, found that the natives
of the Philippines were something new to us also.



Division Headquarters set up its .C.P. at San Jacinto School House,



and Division Artillery set up across the road.



Rutherford - 45

We took our baths, and had our laundry done in a stream behind the 90th Field Artillery.



Rutherford - 45

The grim business began, however, when the 161st Infantry approached Binalonan.



Entering the town with slight resistance, they thought things were well in hand,



but that night, enemy tanks suddenly broke loose in their midst,



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and the doughboys had to knock them out with basic infantry weapons.



Rutherford-45

The coming of dawn revealed the terrible carnage of battle,



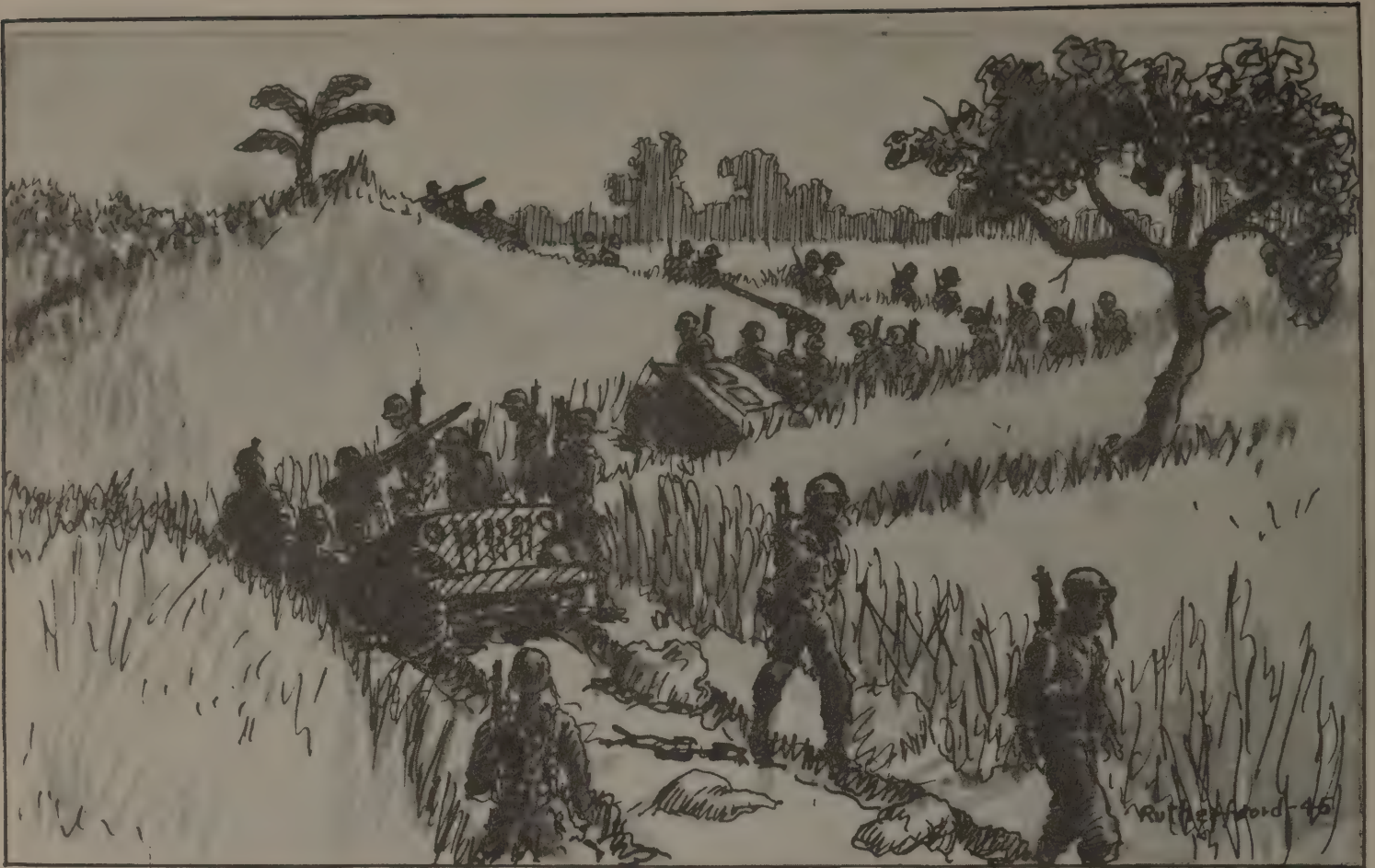
Rutherford-45

so it was not long until the scavengers began their work.



Rutherford-45

Our artillery kept up a barrage



while the 161 advanced on San Manuel.



It sometimes seems that an infantryman at the front does more waiting than anything else.



Artillerymen surveyed the road to San Manuel while their batteries shelled the high ground on its flanks.



War correspondents got front line stories, and pictures of front line heroes, at the Regimental C.P.



Rutherford - 45

Moving through sniper country is always a tedious job,



Rutherford - 45

and enemy fire makes you glad to embrace the hard bosom of "Mother Earth."



Two of those tanks were knocked out just after I sketched them during the drive through the cemetery at San Manuel.



That road through the creek bed visited excruciating pain on the men who had been wounded,



but the collecting station did its best to ease them.



Rutherford - 45

The C.I.C. at Division Headquarters screened hundreds of Filipino farmers who said they were Guerrillas, and wanted to join us.



Rutherford - 45

The doughboys slowly inched their way into San Manuel.



Rutherford - 45

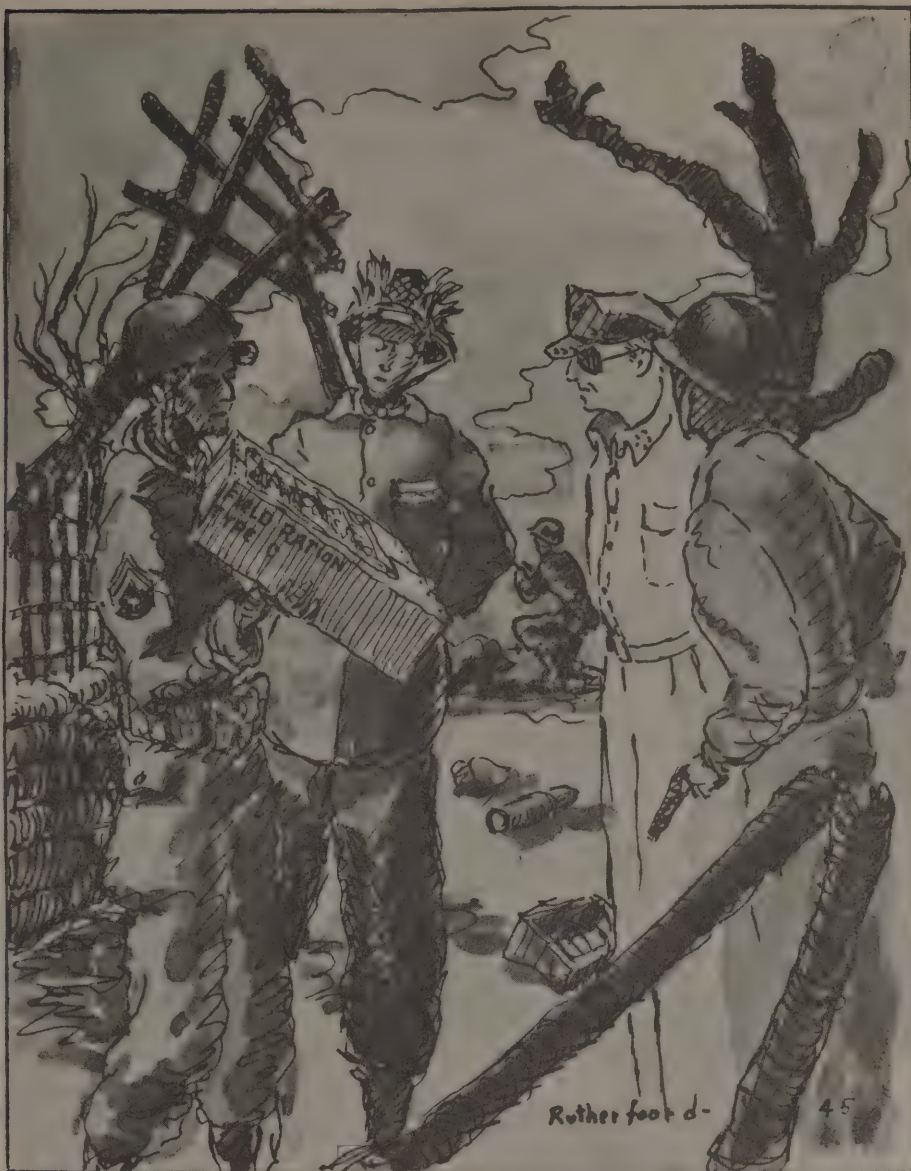
During one of the many counterattacks, a "Nip" managed to get a lunge mine on one of our M.7s,



but what was left of the Jap stayed beside the wreckage, and our doughboys destroyed scores of enemy tanks.



General Mac Arthur paid San Manuel a visit one day,



Rutherford-

45

and seemed well pleased when Colonel Dalton, and General Mullins explained the situation to him.



Rutherford-45

Men in the front lines seldom know how to act when so many stars suddenly appear in their midst.



It was a long dusty ride across the rice paddies to where the 27th was fighting near Umingan.



One night a huge Jap convoy of tanks, infantry, and artillery on its way to Umingan roared into a hamlet called Pemienta,



so the 27th's road block, and bazooka men who were in the fields all along the highway opened fire.



The Jap commander burned to death in his sedan, while his artillery, and armour piled up along the road behind him.



Our artillery



laid a devastating barrage on the convoy,



so all that was left of a once mighty force was smoking wreckage, and mutilated flesh..



The 27th dug its positions before Umingan, while Piper Cubs studied the situation,



and ground O.P.s tried to spot enemy gun positions.



The air strike was a grand sight from our side of the line,



but we could not fully appreciate its devastation until we entered the town after a bloody battle.



You can not realize the cost of war, until you start collecting your own dead.



The 35th's march to Lupao was a long, hot one, and the road was mined as it approached the barrio.



The tanks followed along.



The Language Section can not be praised too highly, for the information it supplied through its expert interrogation of prisoners and its translation of captured enemy documents was invaluable.



The 1st Battalion of the 35th attacked Lupao through the rice paddies from the front,



and the 3rd Battalion



followed by the 2nd,



went around a bull dozer road to attack the town from the rear.



Upon approaching the line, we began to meet those who paid for each yard gained with their blood.



With the battalions squeezing in from both sides of town, it was necessary for the artillery to fire dangerously close to our own men .



The M.7s did a magnificent job at Lupao, {as they did everywhere they went .}



Rutherford-45

The Medics set up aid stations as near the front as possible.



Rutherford-45

The doughboys found a regiment of enemy tanks concentrated within about four blocks. They also found an abundance of souvenirs.



Bazookas helped to keep Jap armour from breaking out of the 35th's ever tightening ring.



When the battle was over, the officers bought a beer issue for the regiment, and the doughboys paraded through the wrecked town with Jap vehicles.



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Passing through San Jose ,



Rutherford - 45

the 27th began its drive up Highway 5.



Knocking out a number of vehicles, they fought their way across a stone irrigation ditch,



and stormed several large caves on the hill side beyond.



When the 27th reached the end of the concrete road,



the 25th Division really began its drive through the mountains .



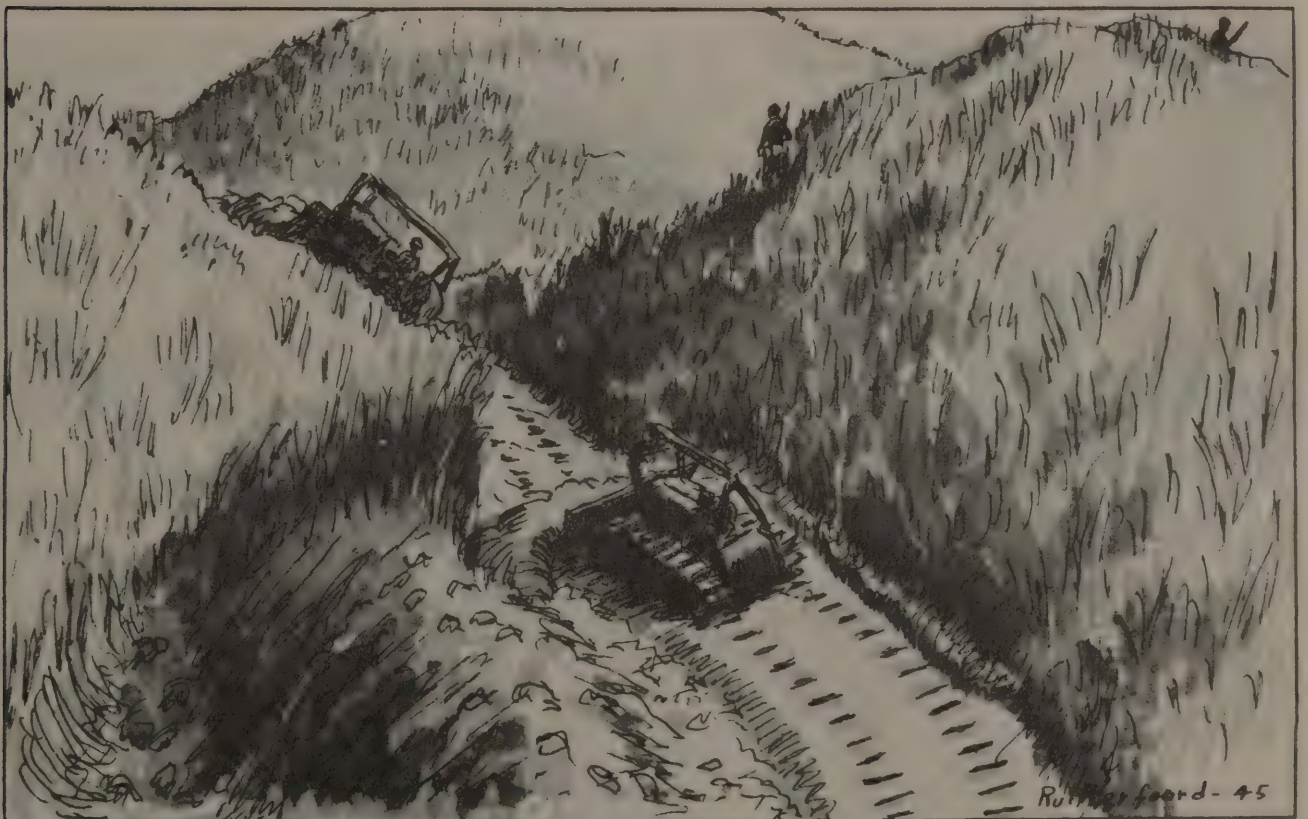
Committed on the left flank , the 161 began to push toward Puncan from the southwest .



One of the highlights of that drive was Bryant Hill, where after running out of fuel , a private first class from the 2nd Battalion hit the last of twenty six Japs on the head with the nozzle to his flame thrower.



Some of the boys told me that they had been on the top of this hill for eighteen scorching days with barely enough water to drink {washing was out of the question}.



Faced with a terrific supply problem, it took the 65th Engineers to solve it.



The 35th Infantry on the right flank began a long end run



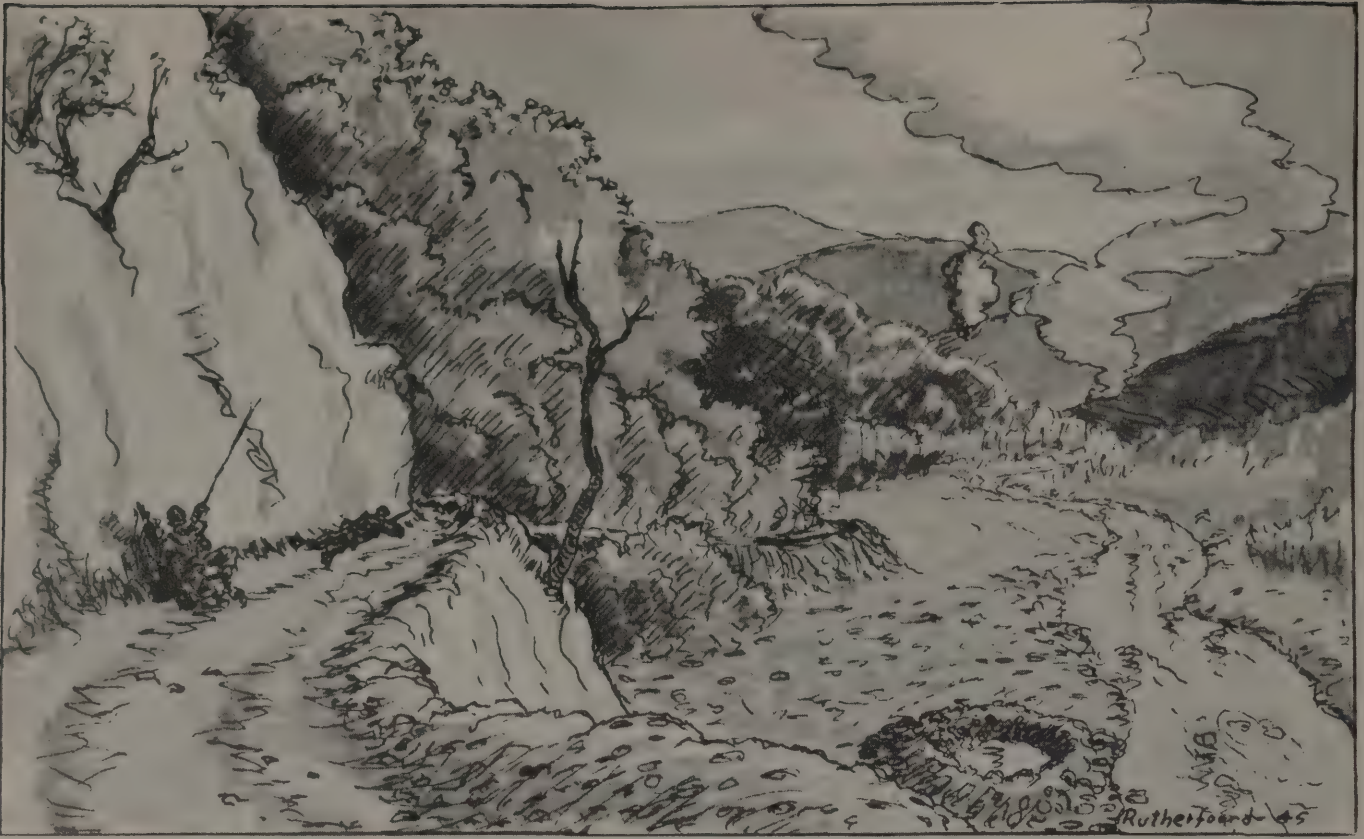
through a town called Carrangalan to attack Puncan and Digdig from the east.



Their line of communication became so extended that the Japs were able to cut it, and they had to be supplied by air drop,



but nothing could stop Colonel Larson's "Cacti" boys.



Flanked on either side by the 161, and the 35th, the 27th continued its drive northward astride Highway 5 against heavy resistance.



A gun position at the top of a sharp "S" curve in the road had its steel doors blown off twice by the Air Corps, and kept on firing until our artillery silenced it with direct hits



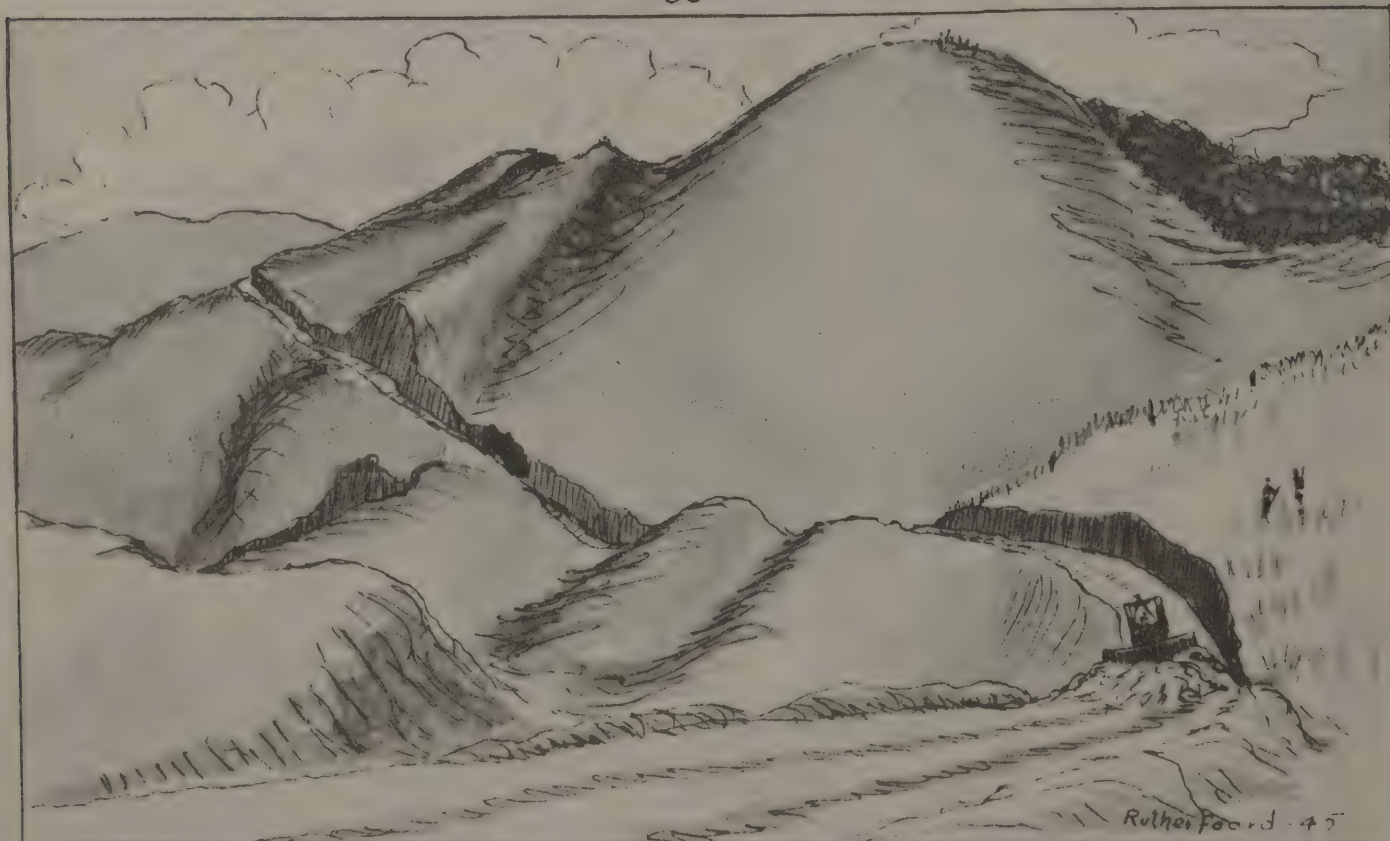
From the 161's objective we could see elements of the 35th coming down a hill on the other side of the valley,



and entering Puncan from the east .



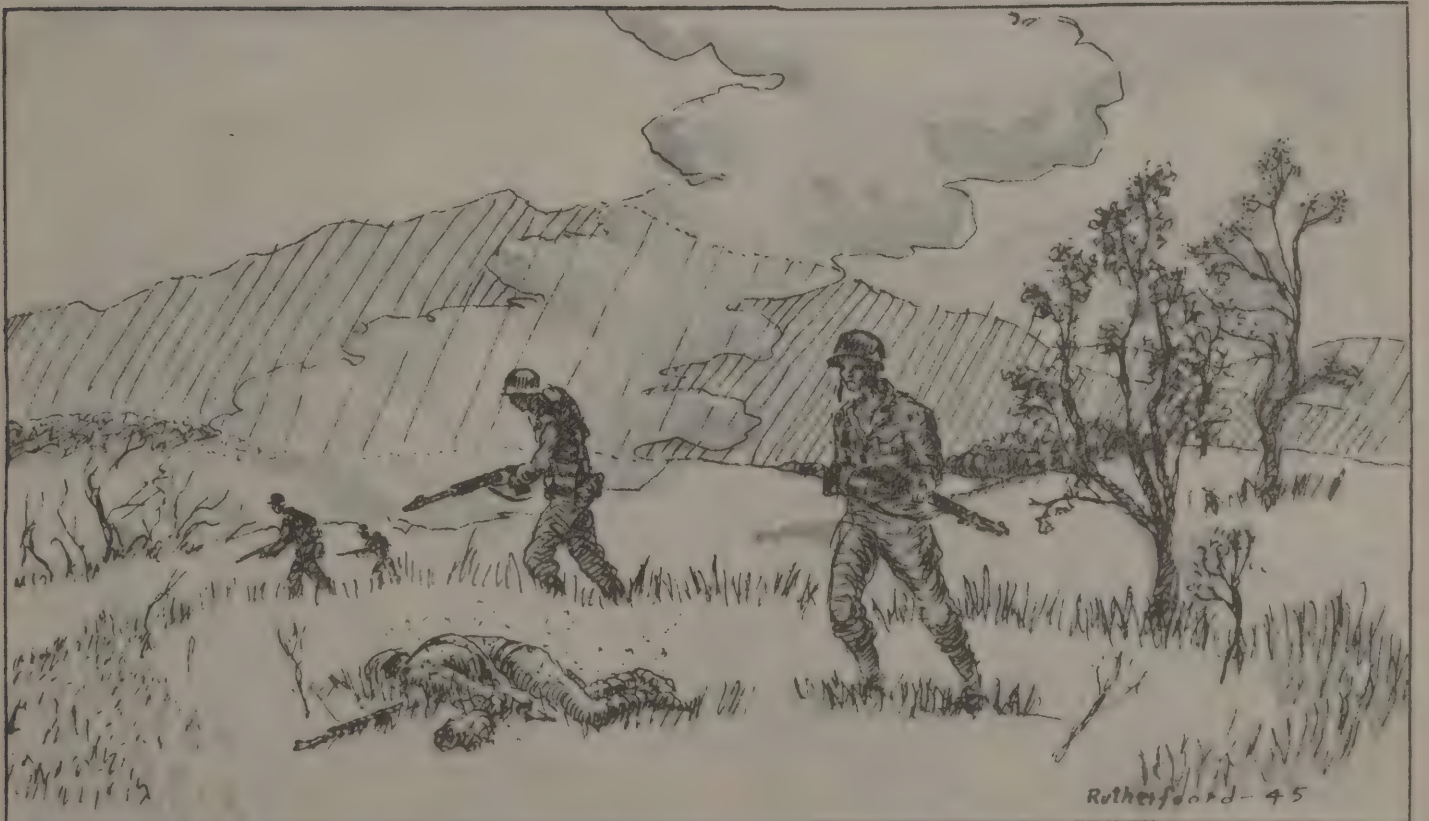
Looking south from the 161's objective, we could see the supply road which the 65th Engineers had built.



It made contact with Highway 5 at Puncan.



The 35th continued its march toward the north ,



and then turned west to attack Digdig .



The 161 toiled through the mountains on the left flank,



and the 27th slugged its way up Highway 5 in the center.



Digdig was of extreme strategic importance, but when the 35th entered it from the east



everyone wondered where the town was.



A hill top , a shelter half , and a fox hole
make a dreary refuge in the rain .



It was said that the Japs were more afraid
of our artillery observation planes than they were
of bombers .



Every draw, and gully along Highway 5 was honeycombed with caves and pillboxes which the 27th had to clean out.



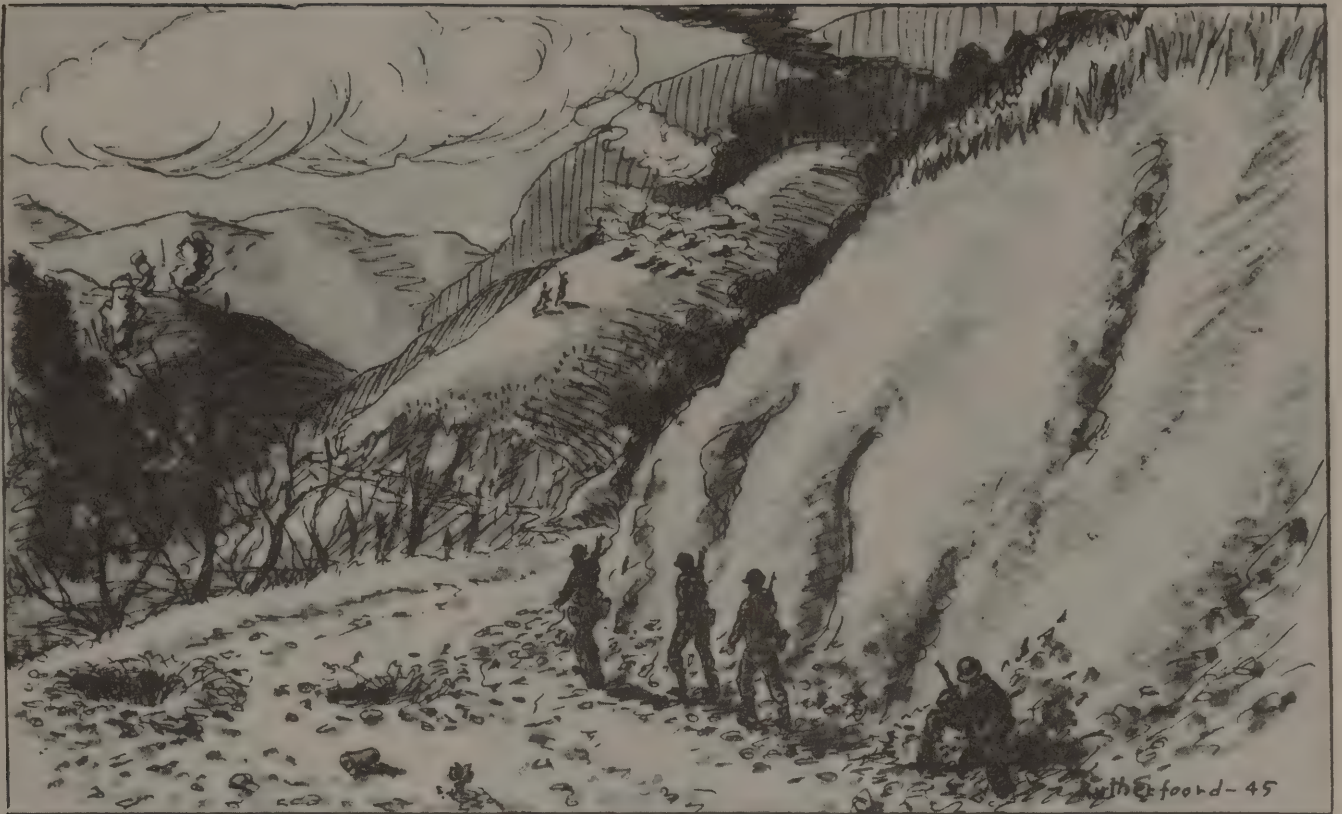
The Japs destroyed Putlan Bridge in the 35th's face,



so we felt that a prize had been lost.



Filipino carriers helped bring our dead down from the line while fighting raged in the mountains on either side of the valley.



From Putlan Bridge we could see a fire fight between men of the 27th and a pocket of Japs who had been cut off, but were trying to break out of their trap.



The enemy continued shelling the bridge and the area surrounding it, and the Filipino laborers became so panicky that a number of them were injured.



When the shelling lifted, we climbed the hill, and entered a wood on its crest to observe the Wolfhound's fire fight at close range. After the tossing of a few grenades however, there was silence, so we went on up the hill to where a demolition crew was clearing the way for a tank.



Suddenly a shot rang out, and an officer fell. Moments later there was another shot, and an enlisted man screamed. A medic went to get the screaming doughboy, but was killed, so the wounded man came in alone. It was here that Father Scannell was wounded, and the Jap was found with an M.1 rifle.



The 161, on the other side of the valley, met heavy resistance



as it struggled up the precipitous slope to the ridge leading to Norton's Knob.



From an observation post there I saw Balet Pass for the first time .



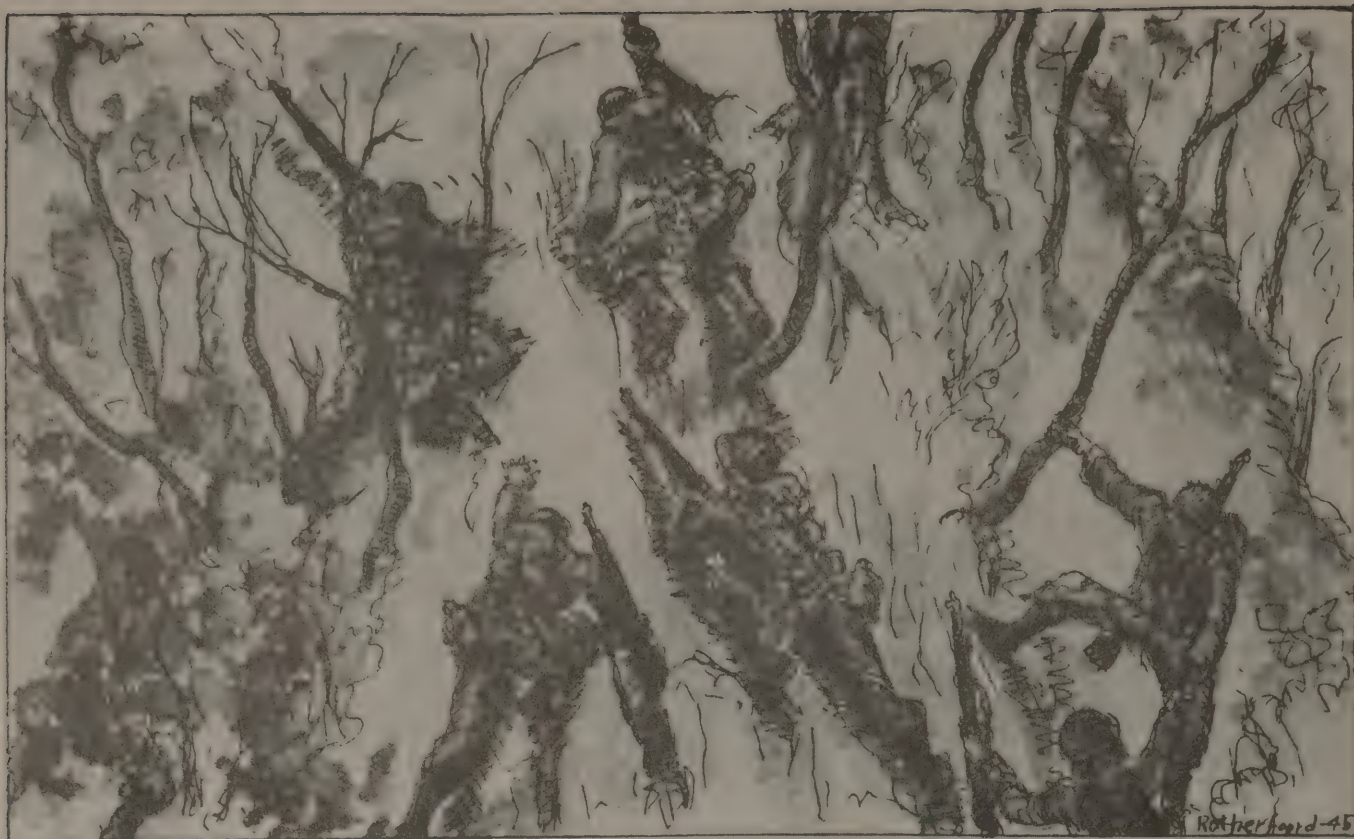
Farther along the ridge , however , we encountered country which recalled the treacherous jungles of the Solomons .



The 65th Engineers improvised a way whereby vehicles could negotiate the steep approach to Norton's Knob Ridge,



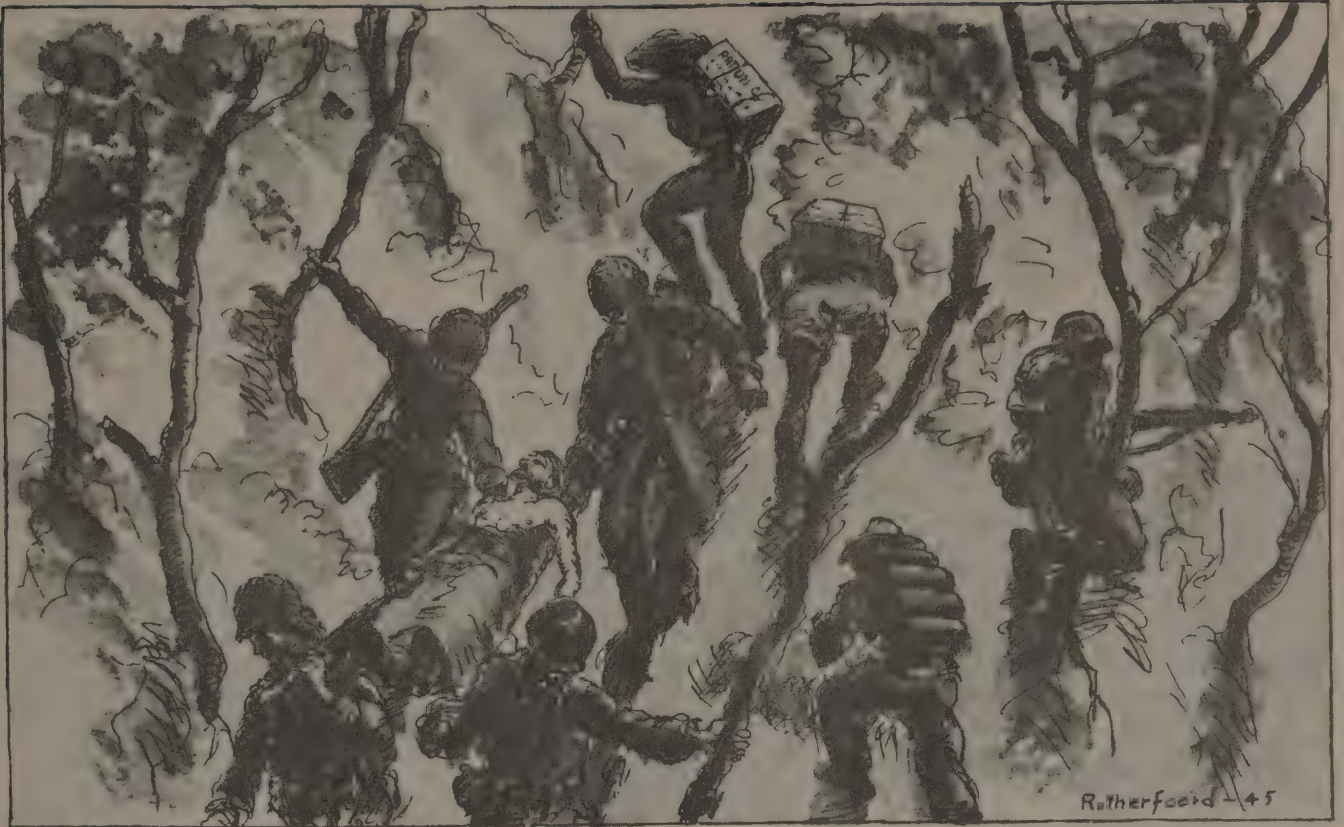
so the O.P. had frequent visitors from Division Headquarters on occasions of interest, such as air strikes on Baleté Pass.



The 2nd Battalion of the 27th was ordered to start the Wolfhound's assault on Myoko, the largest mountain south of Balet Pass,



so the 65th Engineers continued their performance of miracles, while Filipino carriers kept a steady stream of supplies moving up the arduous grades of the newly built roads.



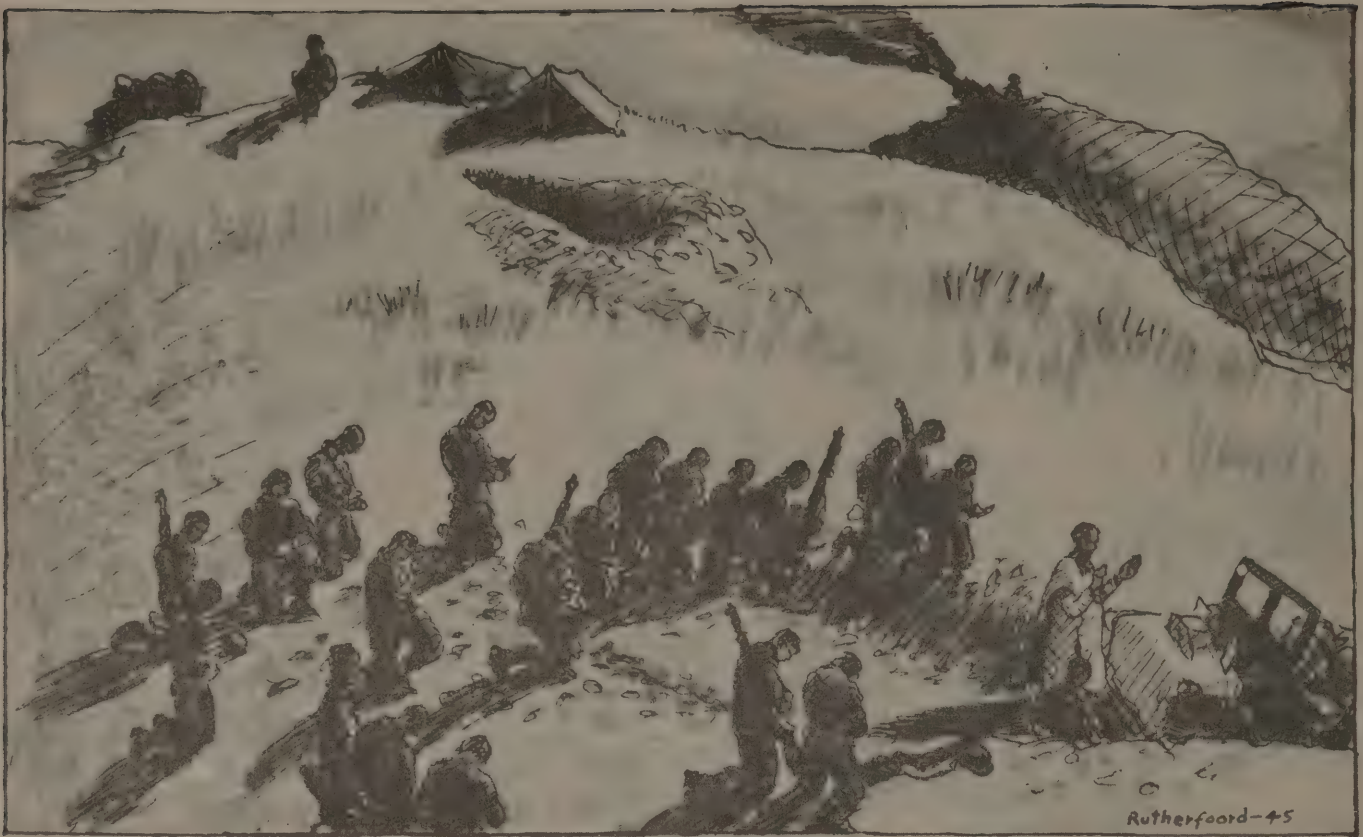
Rutherford - 45

The battle grounds were so remote that it often took thirty-six hours or more to transport the wounded from the line to the collecting station

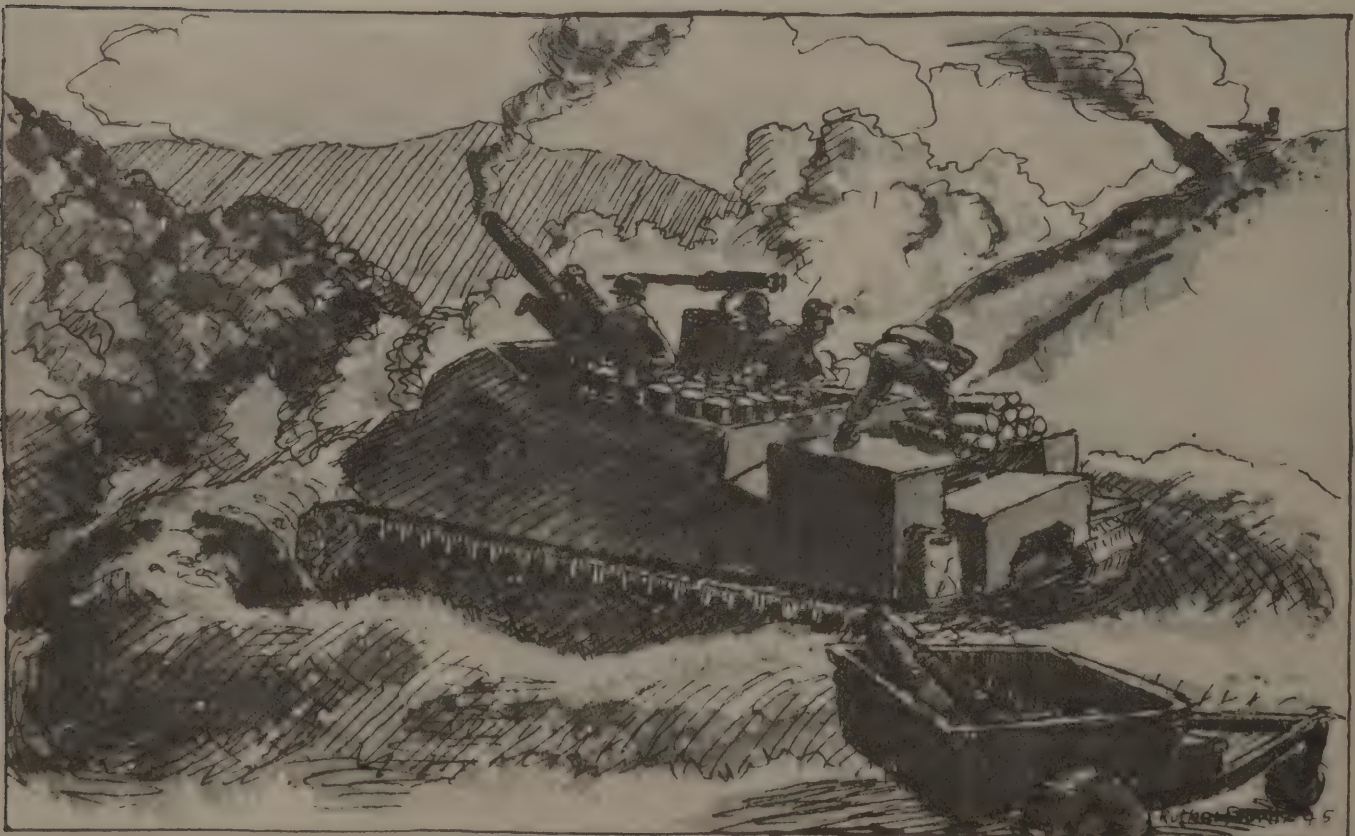


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One of our officers used to say, "The three 'F's of combat are fog, fatigue, and fear."



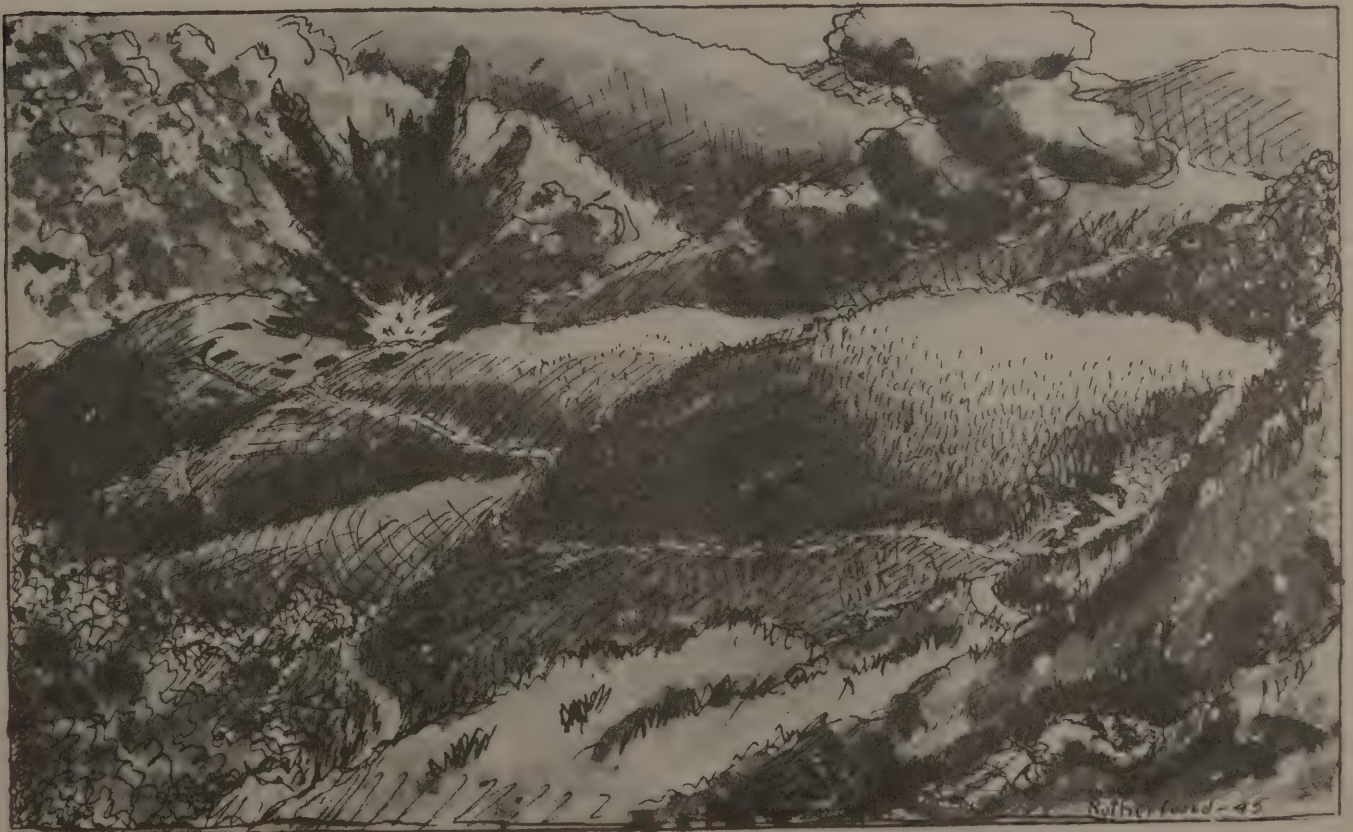
I do not subscribe to the maxim, "There are no atheists in fox holes", but I am sure that war can not rob a true believer of his faith in God.



The 35th's M.7's shelled Kabuto Mountain in support of the regiment's drive up the Putlan River Valley.



Men of the 27th's 1st Battalion just east of the Highway studied the situation through a Jap periscope because it would have been suicide to stick their heads above the skyline .



They were later relieved by the 1st Battalion of the 35th when the "Cacti" Regiment moved to the Division's center for the drive on Kapintalan.



The 161 in the meantime, had pushed its way out the ridge to Norton's Knob,



and was preparing to shove the last Japs off of that strongpoint.



Enemy machine guns barked in furious defiance as a bulldozer cleared the way for a tankdozer



which drove right into the Jap lines and blasted them out of their holes at pointblank range.



The doughboys then made their charge, and after killing the last "Nips" on Norton's Knob, they secured the area.



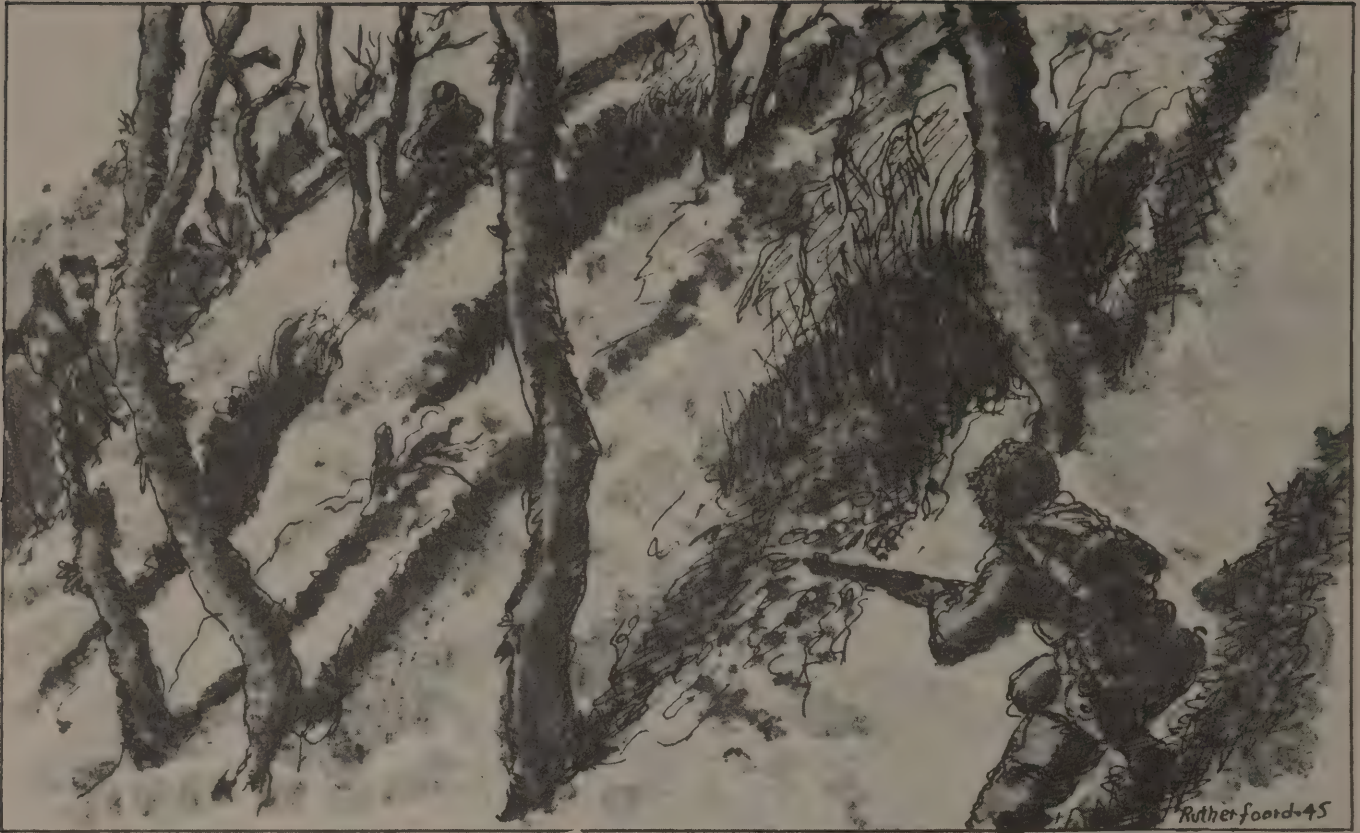
We had the best artillery in the world, but our supply of ammunition was woefully inadequate for the job.



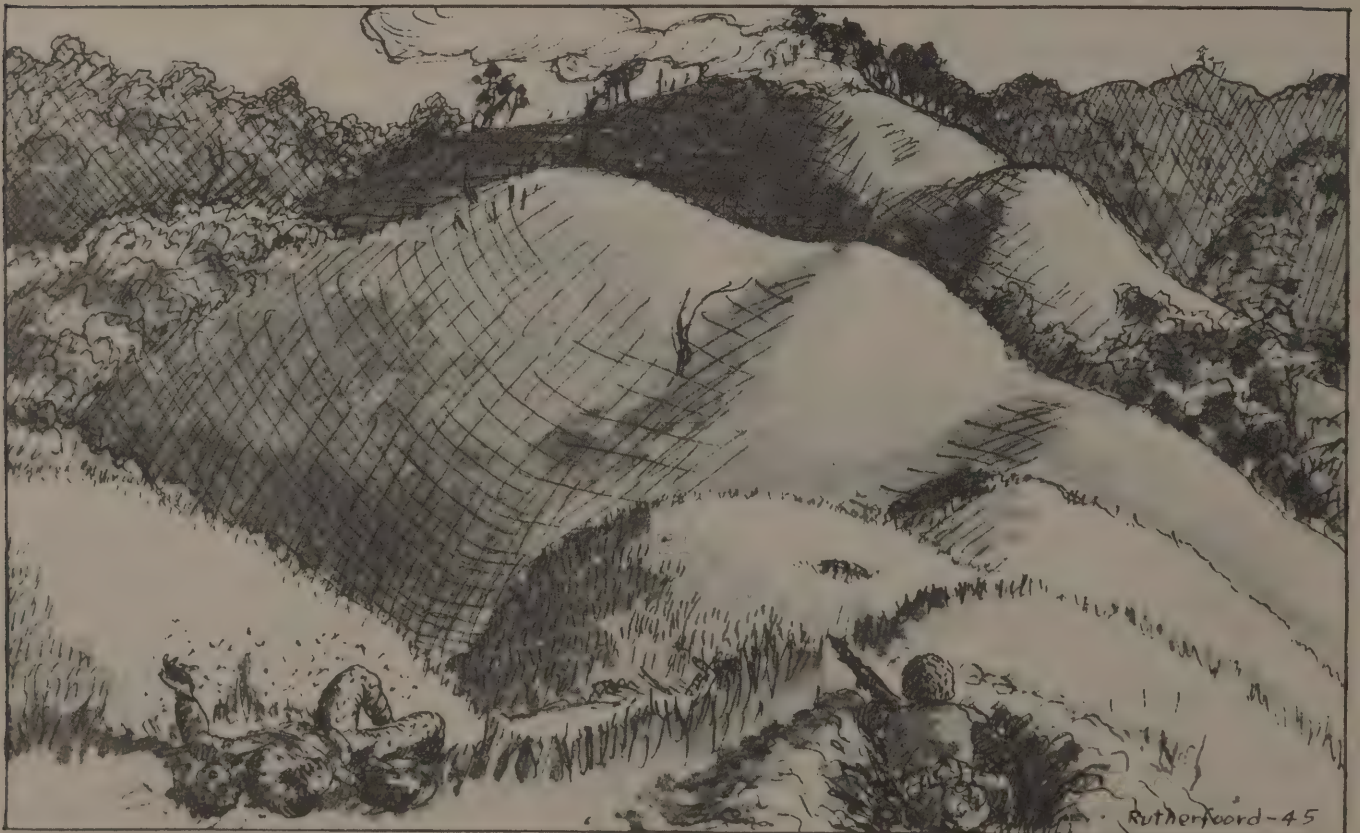
The 161's next objective was the top of a hill so steep that in spite of the road built by the engineers on the heels of the doughboys, no vehicle without tracks could make the grade unaided by a winch.



The doughboys received so many counterattacks on the ridge above "Winch Hill" that they began to call it "Banzai Ridge".



After "Banzai Ridge", they fought their way to a strongly fortified hill, which was honeycombed with caves,



and they named it "Crump Hill" in honour of the first man who was killed there.



In the path of the 35th, west of Myoko, and east of Highway 5, lay Kapintalan Ridge.



It soon became evident that the whole ridge line was swarming with Japs, and bristling with automatic weapons.



Progress on Myoko became increasingly difficult for the 27th, as that gallant regiment stormed strongpoint after strongpoint, "The Wart", "The Pimple", "The Scar", "Baldy Hill", and many others.



The 2nd Battalion bypassed the remaining fortifications on Myoko, and executed a surprise attack on an enemy strongpoint on "Lone Tree Hill", just west of a grassy saddle connecting Myoko Mountain and Kapintalan Ridge. Here the doughboys had to be supplied by air drops.



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Kapintalan Ridge underwent a terrific shelling from M.7's,
field artillery,

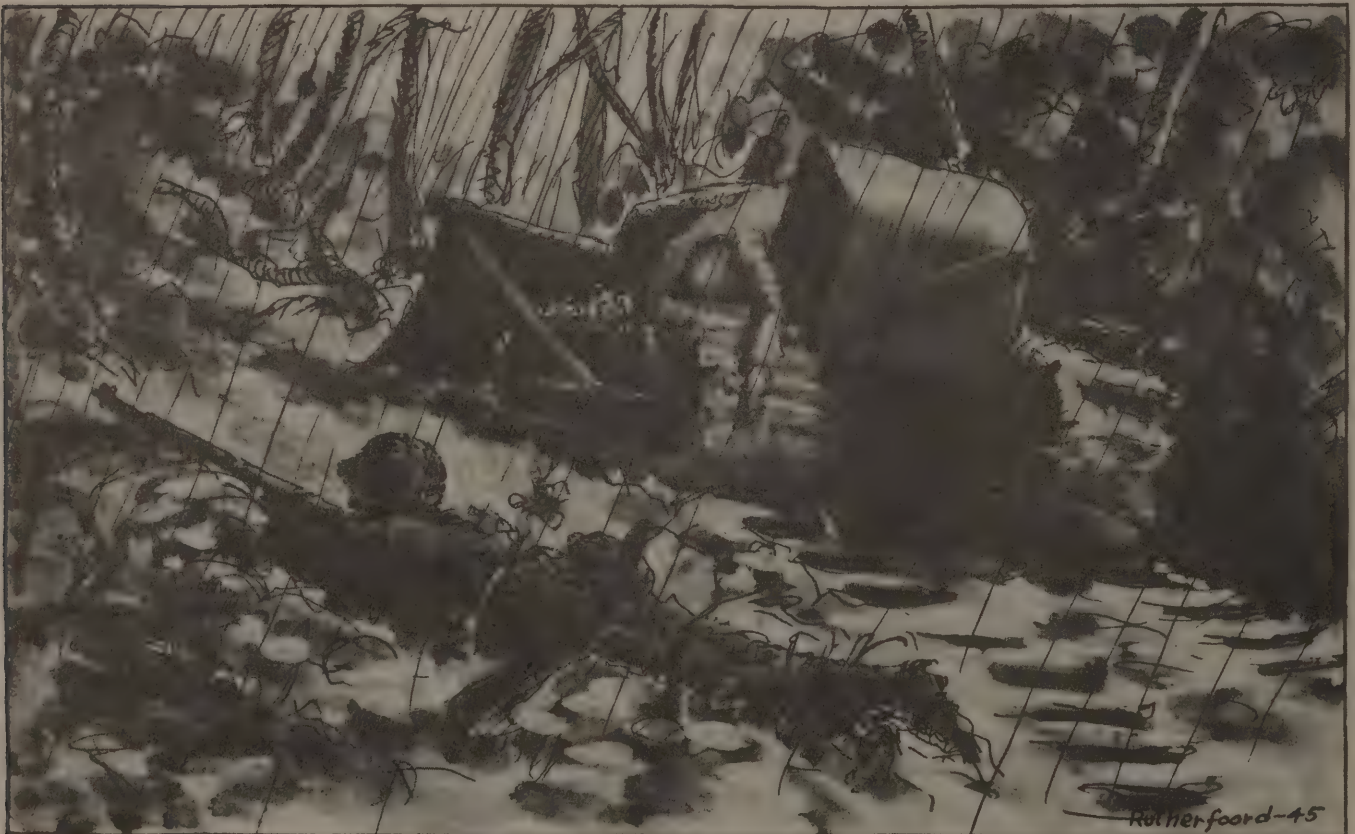


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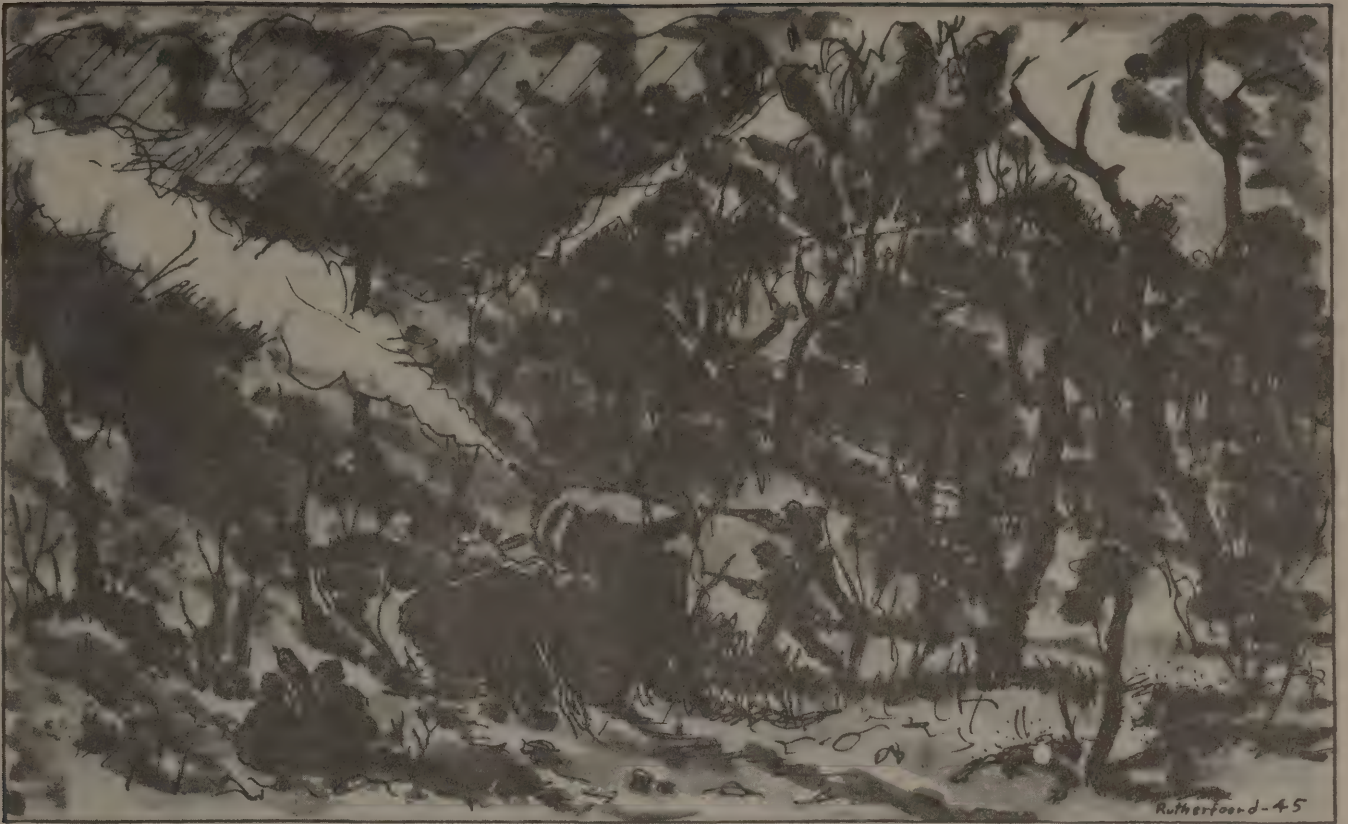
and mortars.



A Jap infiltration party penetrated the 27th's Advance Regimental Command Post on Myoko.



These infiltration parties also gave the engineers a great deal of trouble.



The 27th's flame thrower tanks struck terror in the hearts of the Japanese on Myoko, and when they jumped out of their holes to flee the doughboys cut them down.



The indomitable 65th Engineers pushed the supply road immediately behind the infantry along the entire ridgeline on towering Myoko Mountain.



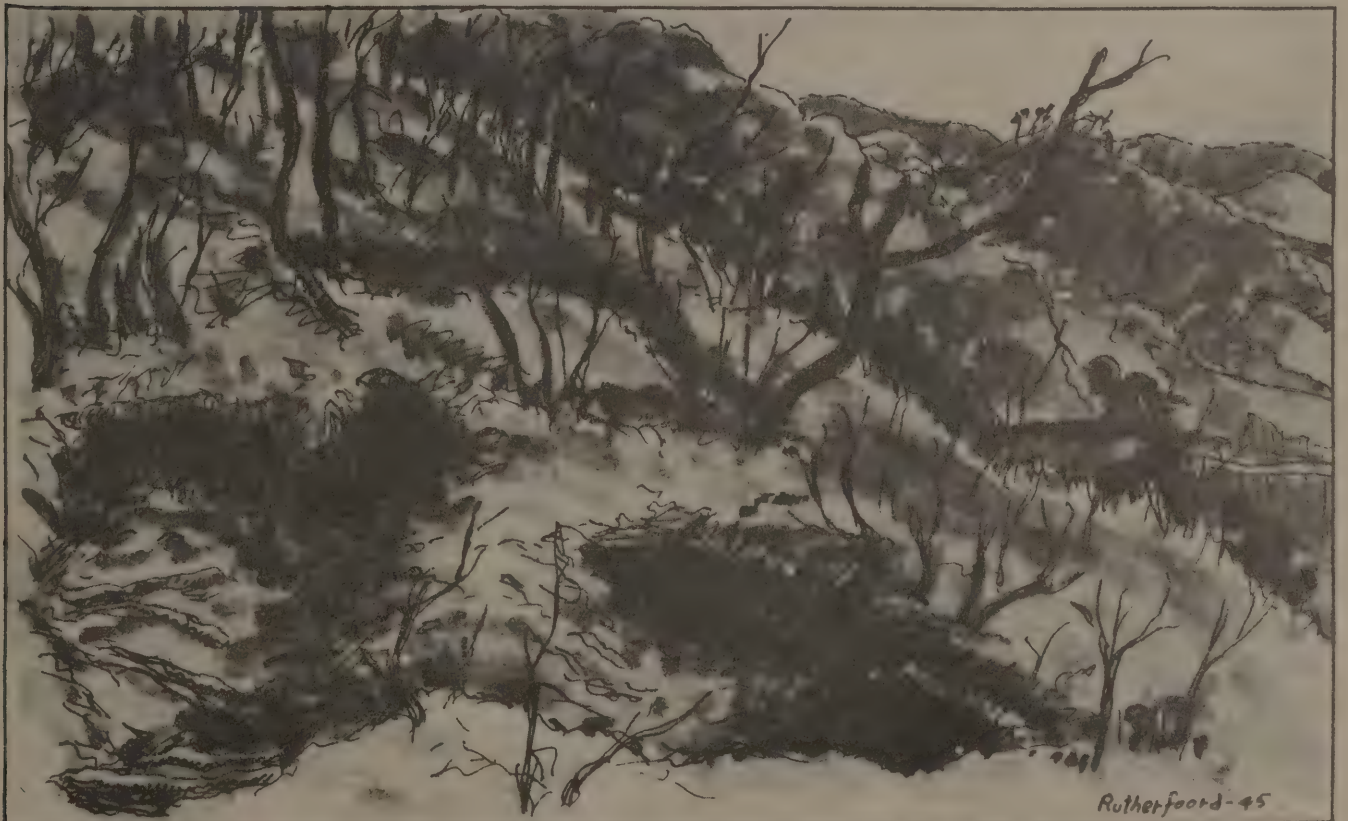
As the Japanese defense lines before Balete Pass grew stronger, it became necessary for us to dig in for a long siege .
We had 90 millimeter dual purpose antiaircraft guns



dug into positions on Norton's Knob Ridge, and Banzai Ridge, from which direct fire could be laid on almost any point in the vicinity of Highway 5 from Kapintalan to the Pass.



From a 161 O.P. we could see Kembu Plateau being prepared for attack.



After the terrific shelling, our infantry stormed its steep slopes.



The 65th Engineers built a supply road to the top of the plateau while fighting still raged there .



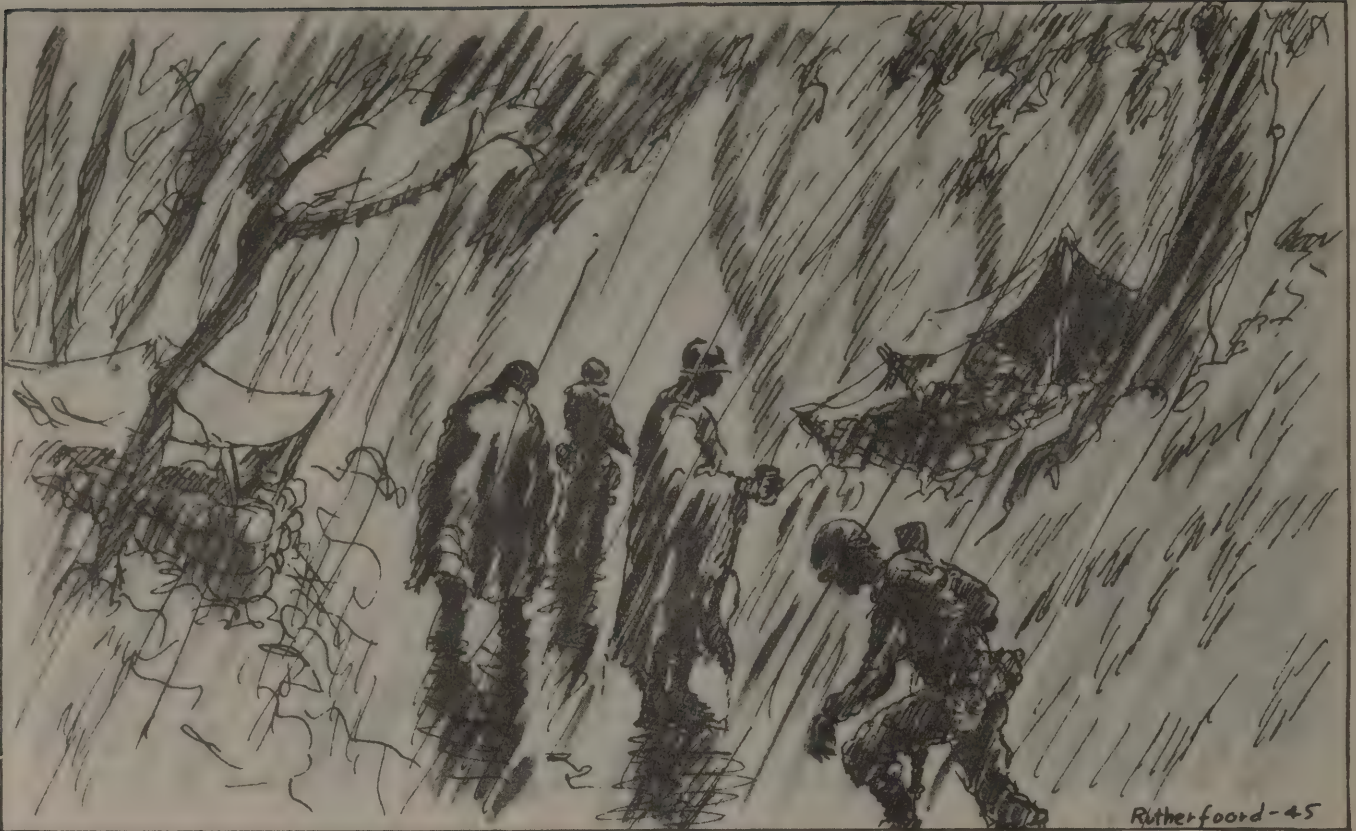
The Kembu Plateau fortifications were an unbelievable network of caves, shafts, and covered trenches through which the Japs could move to almost any point on the mountain without going above ground .



One of the caves {apparently a hospital} had seventy bunks in it .



From a Jap O.P. on Kembu , we could look south and realize to our horror that the enemy had been looking down our throats from the very beginning of the siege of Balete Pass .



The rainy season



increased our difficulties a thousand times over.



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The 35th on Kapintalan Ridge was supplied by carrying parties



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as the doughboys pushed deeper into the Jap defenses.



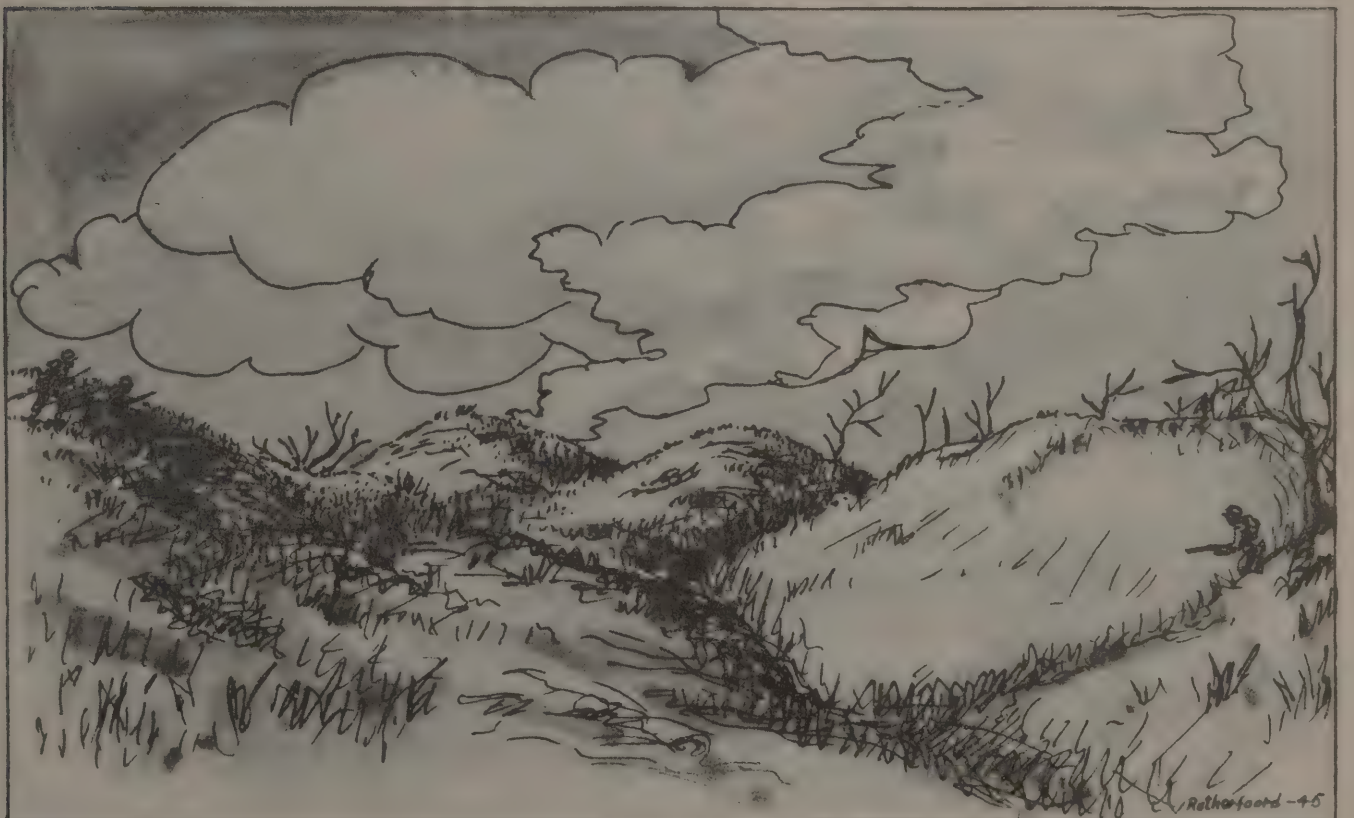
Hunger taught us that the living must eat under any circumstances .



Kapintalan Ridge was a network of covered trenches, machine gun positions, and small caves from one end to the other .



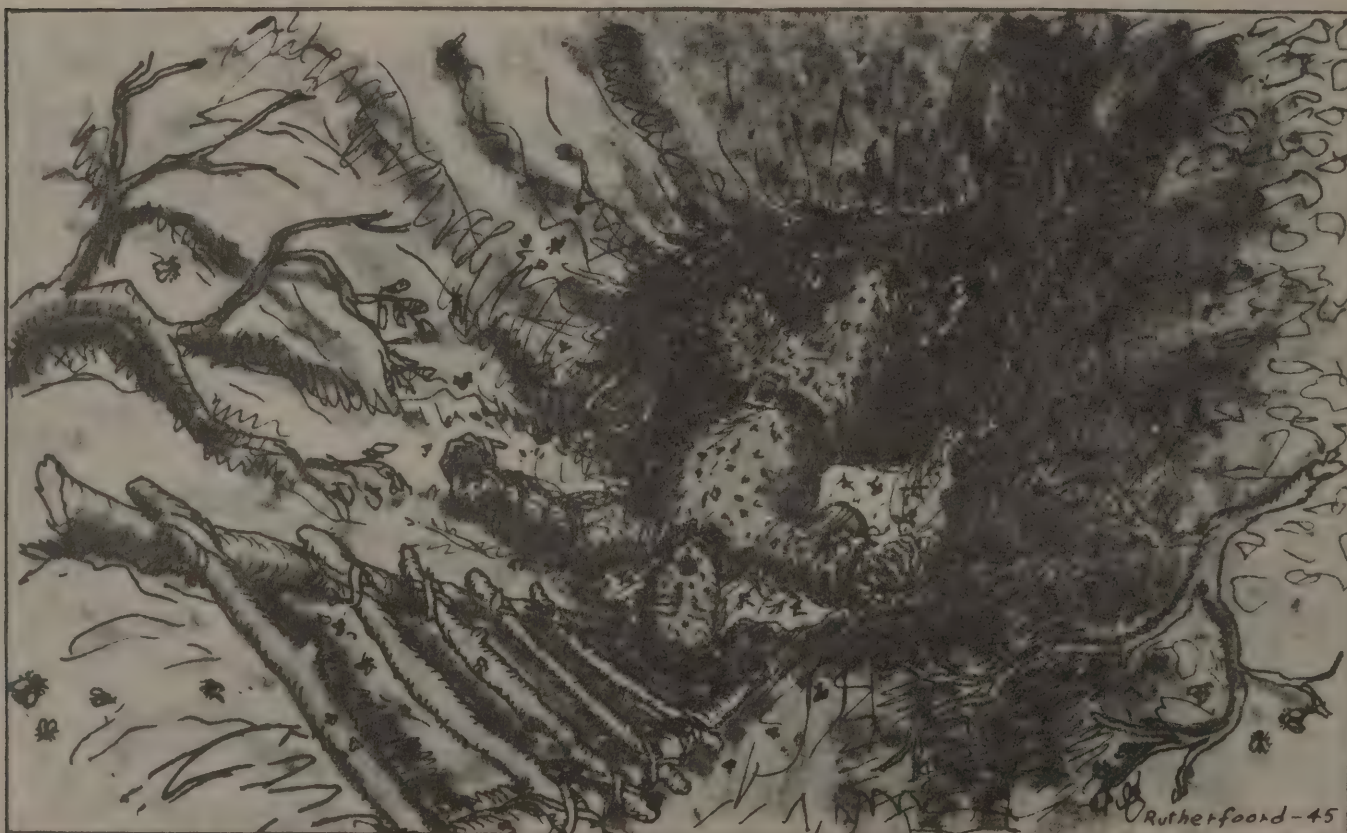
On Lone Tree Hill I saw a Jap field piece which had not been detected until the doughboys stumbled onto it when the 27th stormed that strongpoint .



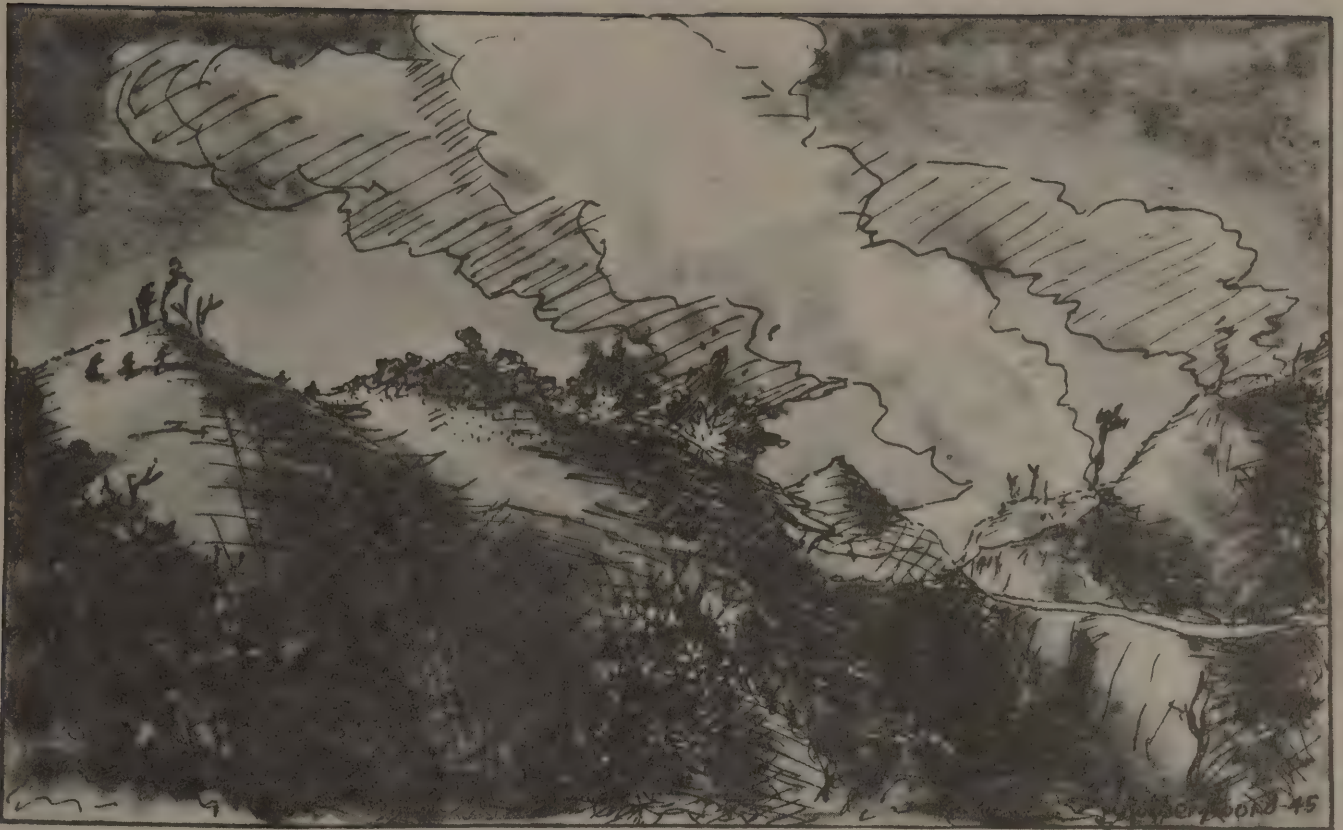
From Lone Tree Hill, the 2nd Battalion of the 27th Infantry fought its way southward along Kapintalan Ridge



past "Maggot Hill" and many other places reeking with the stink of rotten flesh to make a junction with the 35th which was driving northward.



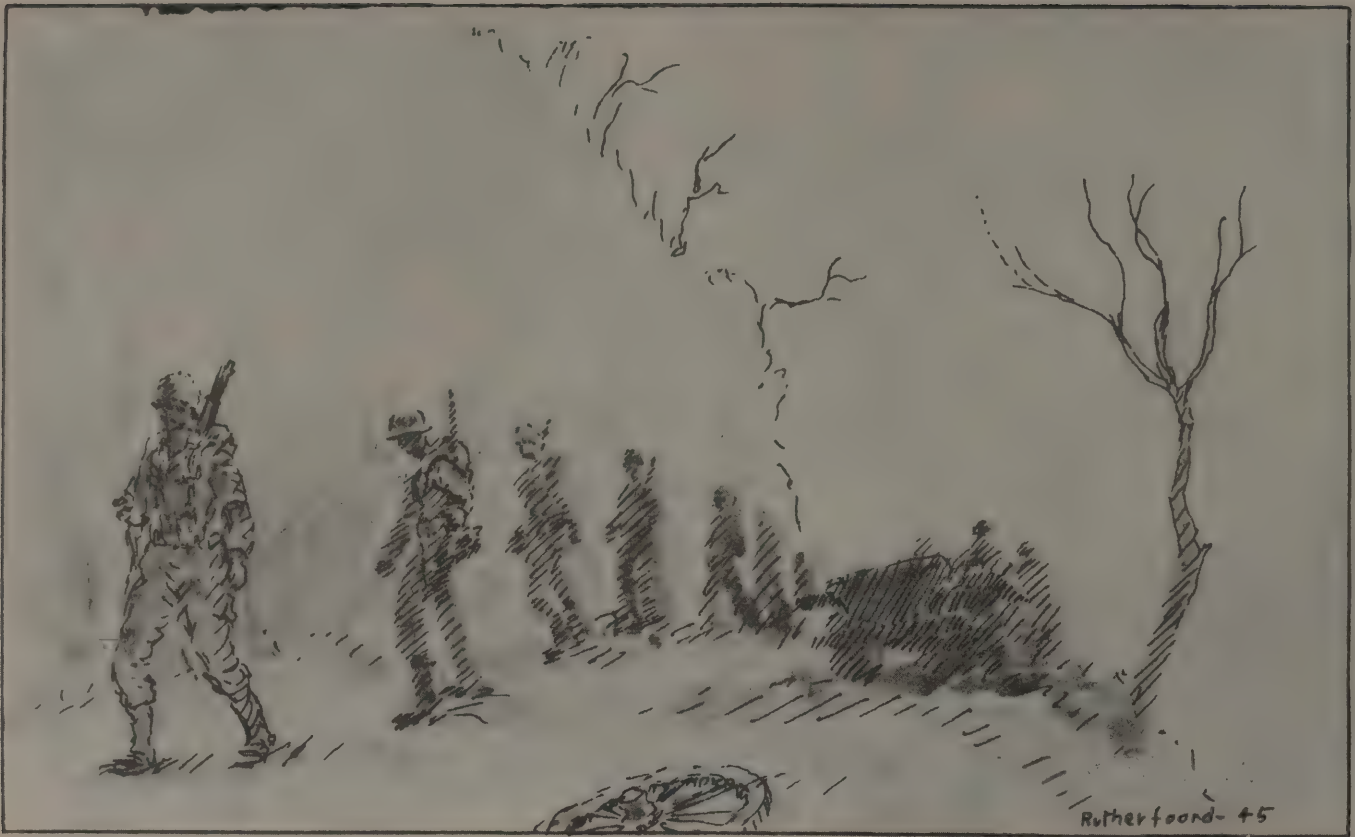
With the closing of the gap between the two regiments Kapintalan Ridge was our's.



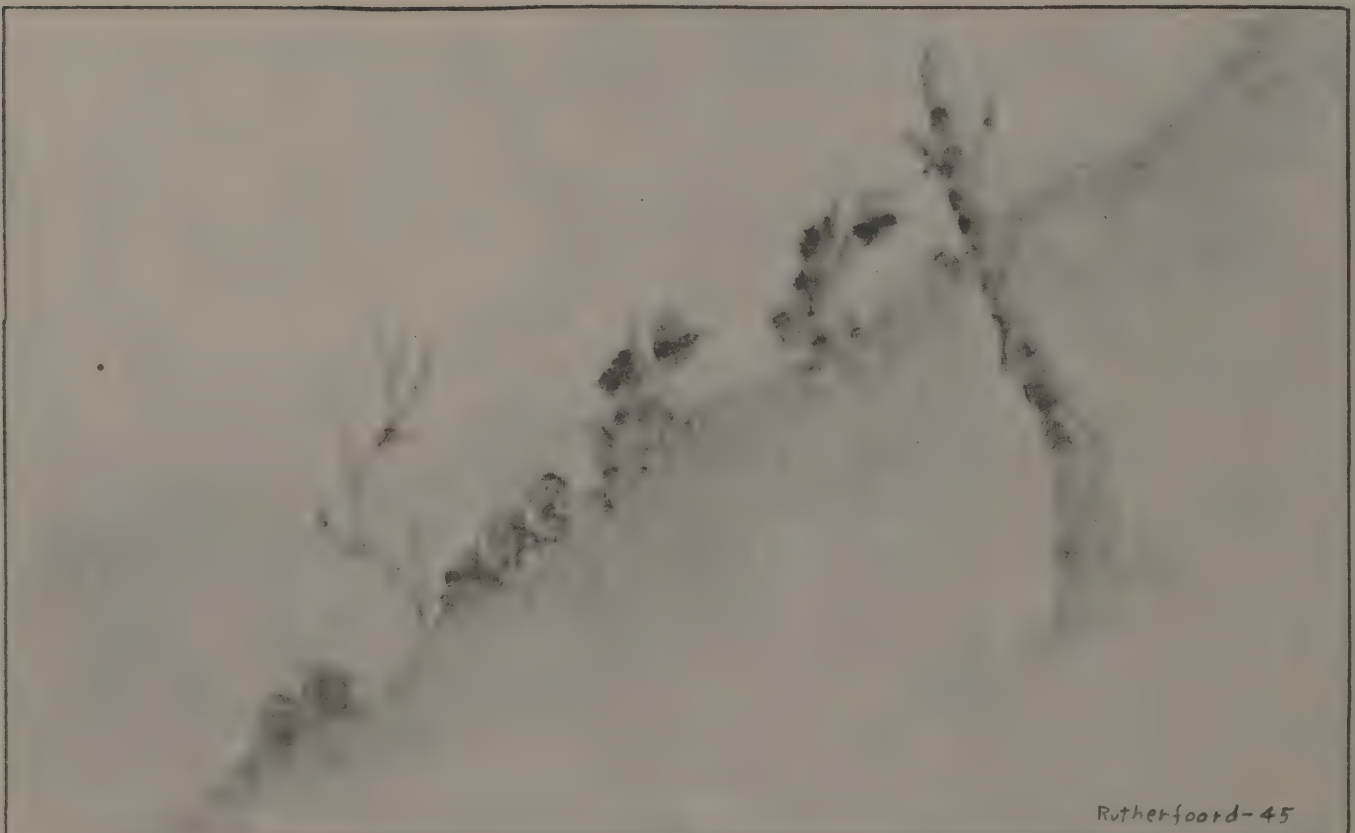
The 161 fought its way from Kembu Plateau to Balete Ridge and then turned eastward toward the Pass .



Men of the 27th stormed from Lone Tree Hill down "Wolfhound Ridge", {relieved themselves at the Rest House}, and made a junction with the 161 just west of Balete Pass .



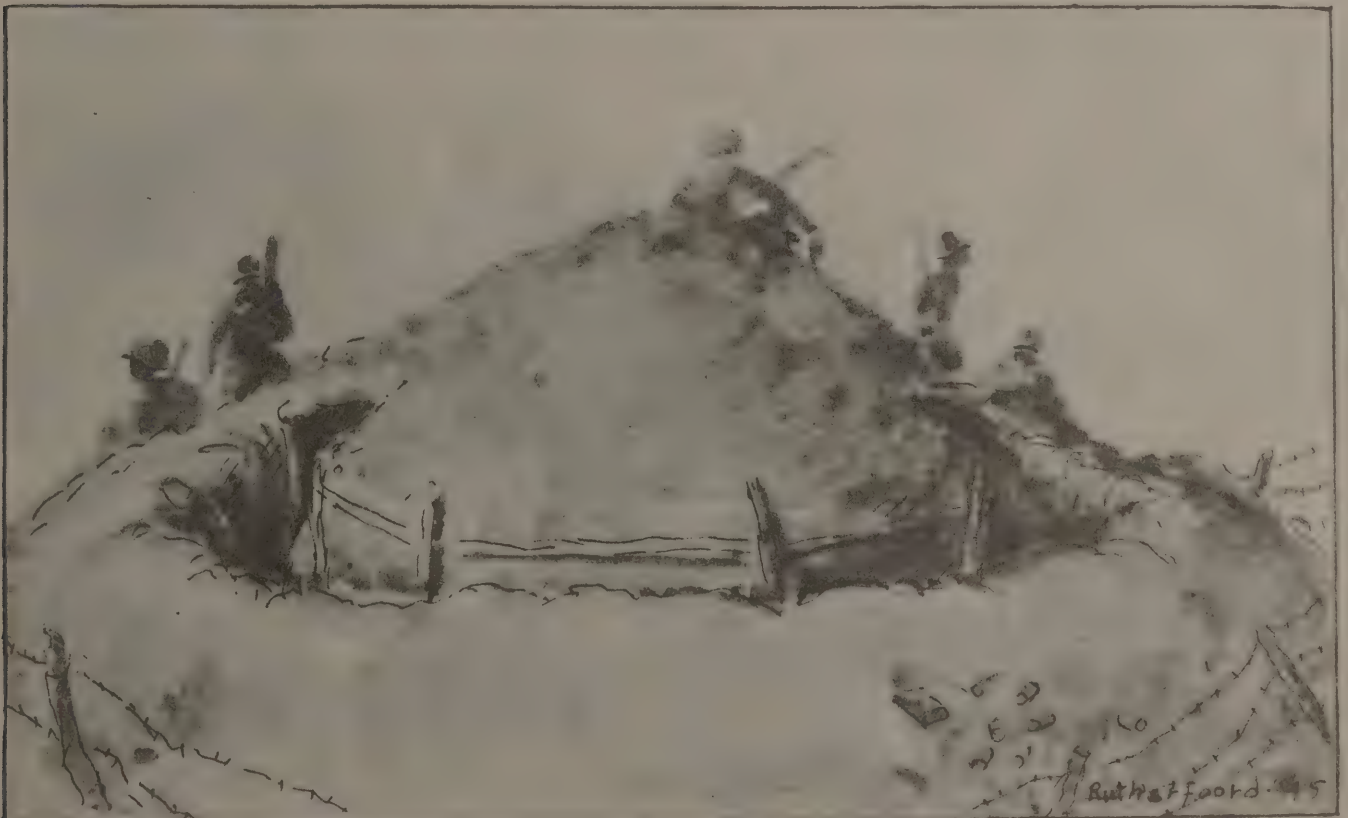
Clouds enveloped the whole Pass area in the mornings ,



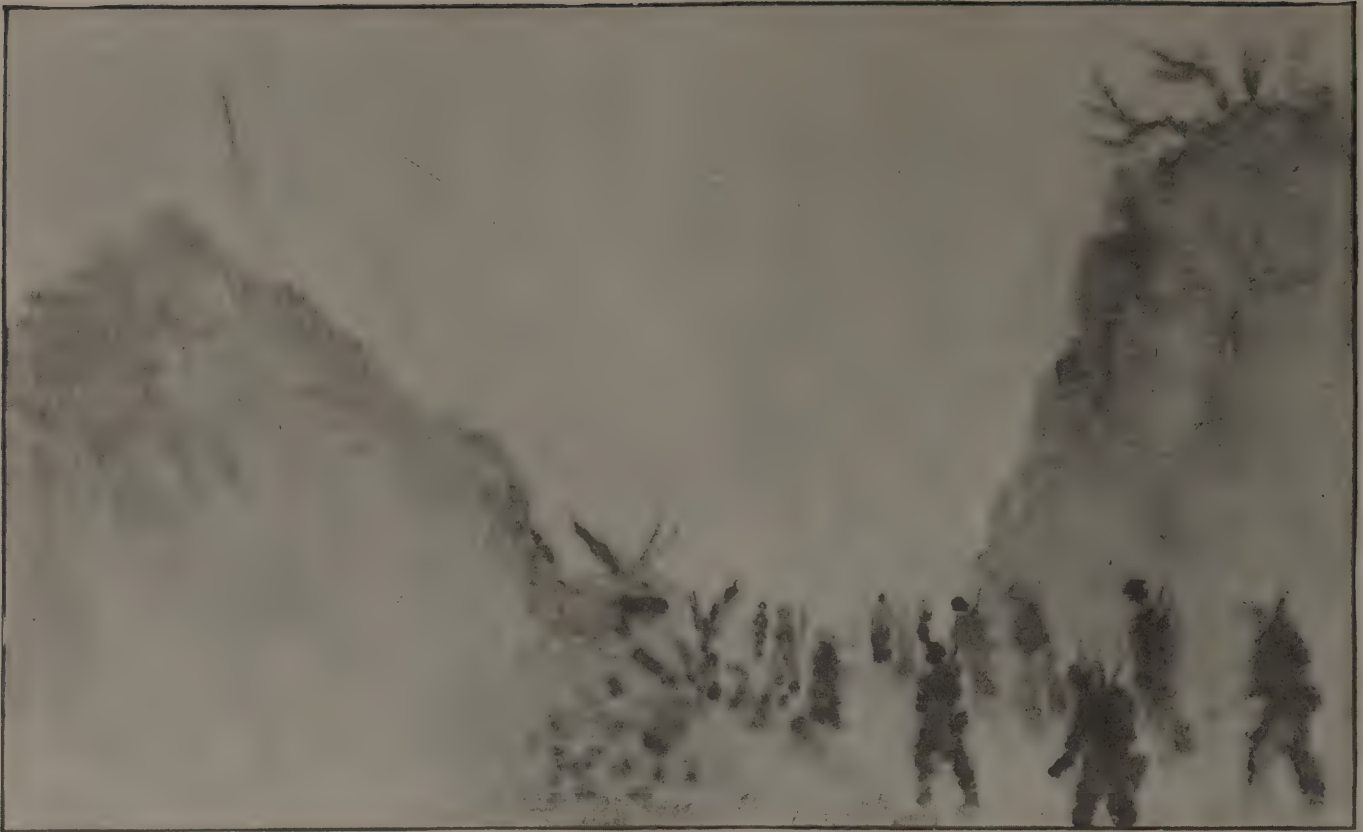
making the 35th look like a regiment of ghosts as it passed through the Division's center for the attack on Bolong .



Climbing along the steep slopes that fell away before Balete Pass, I stumbled onto countless numbers of blasted caves, and wrecked field pieces which had once been a constant menace to the whole division.



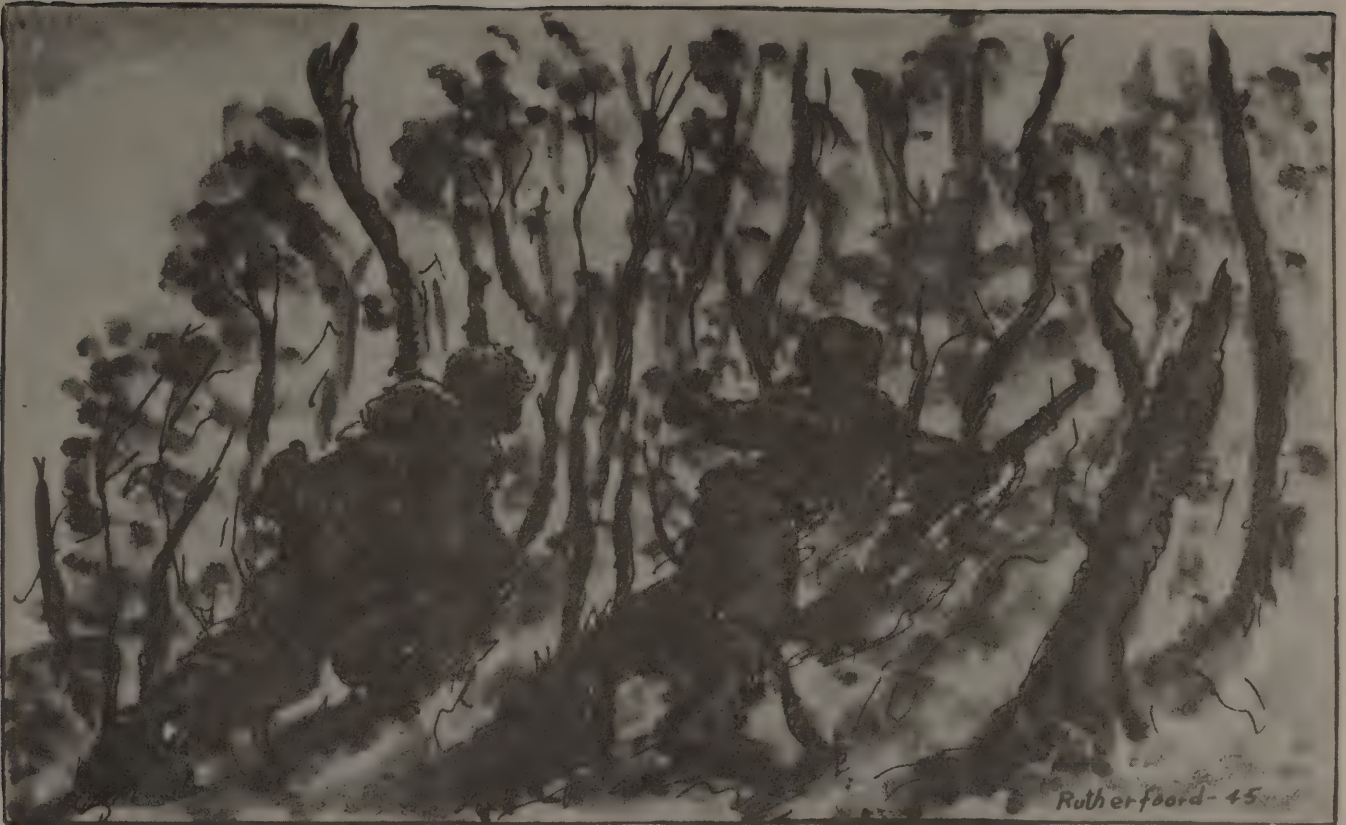
I saw a former Jap observation post on Balete Ridge manned by our own artillerymen,



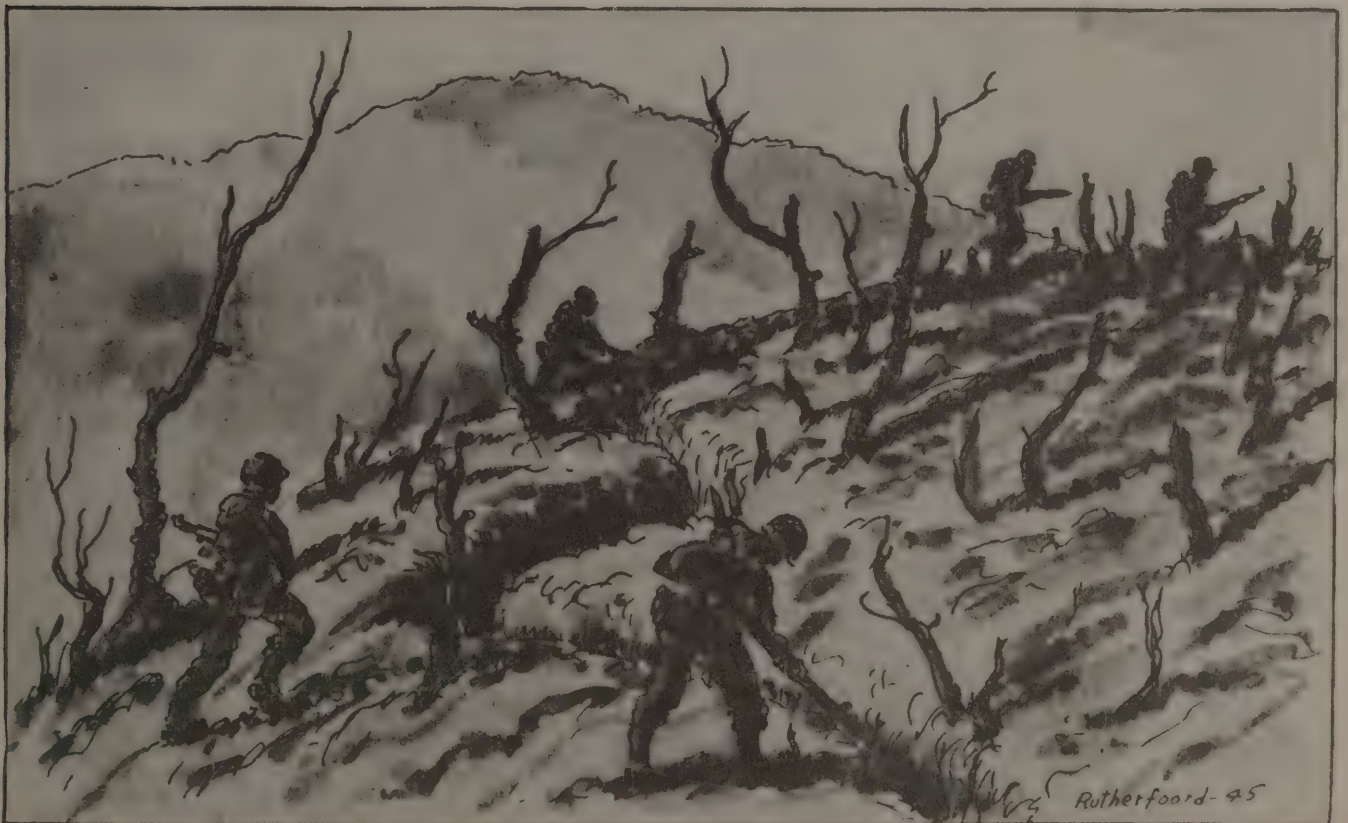
and I watched elements of the 35th Infantry move through the Pass to start a downhill fight for the first time .



The 161 , however , was still facing a determined foe west of Balete Pass ,



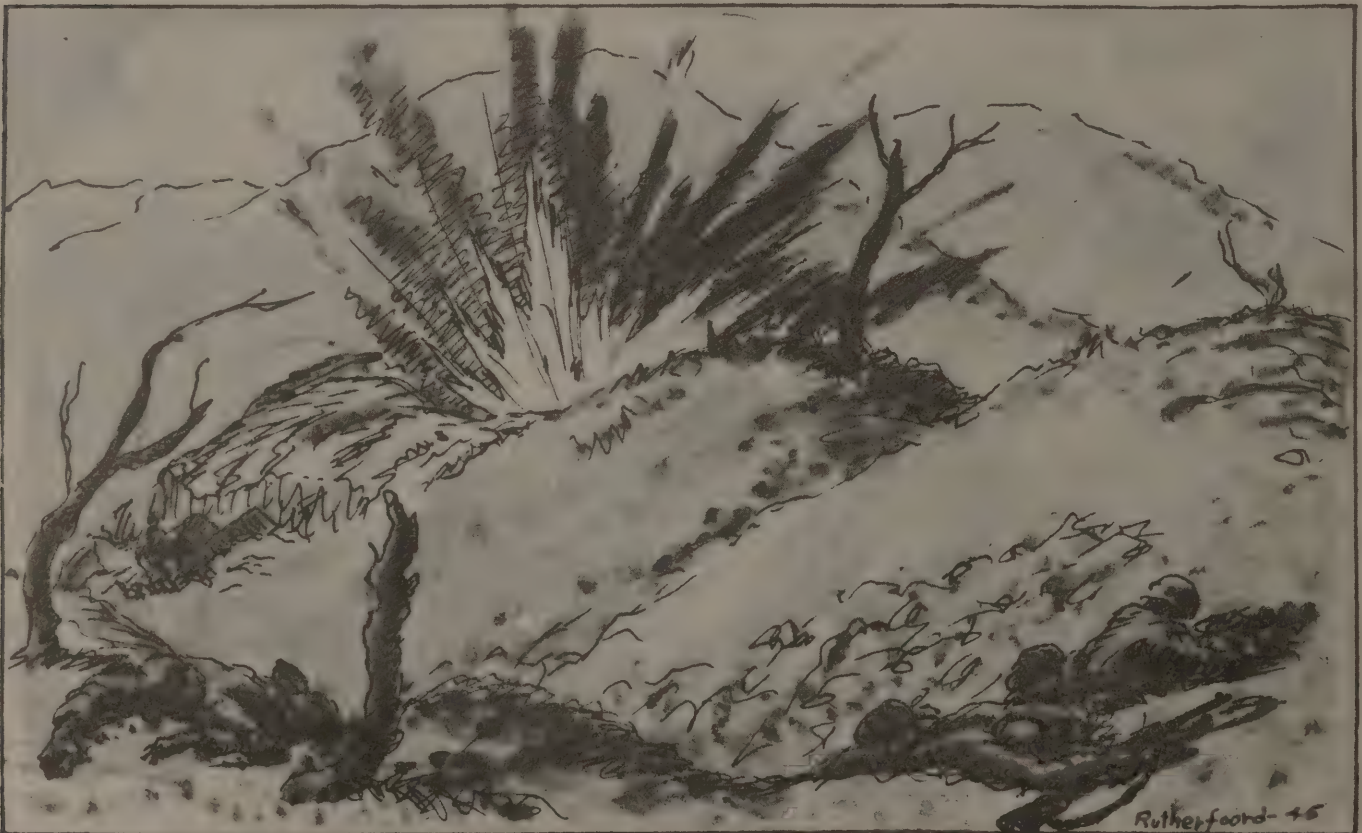
because the Japanese on Haruna Mountain had been ordered to hold the high ground



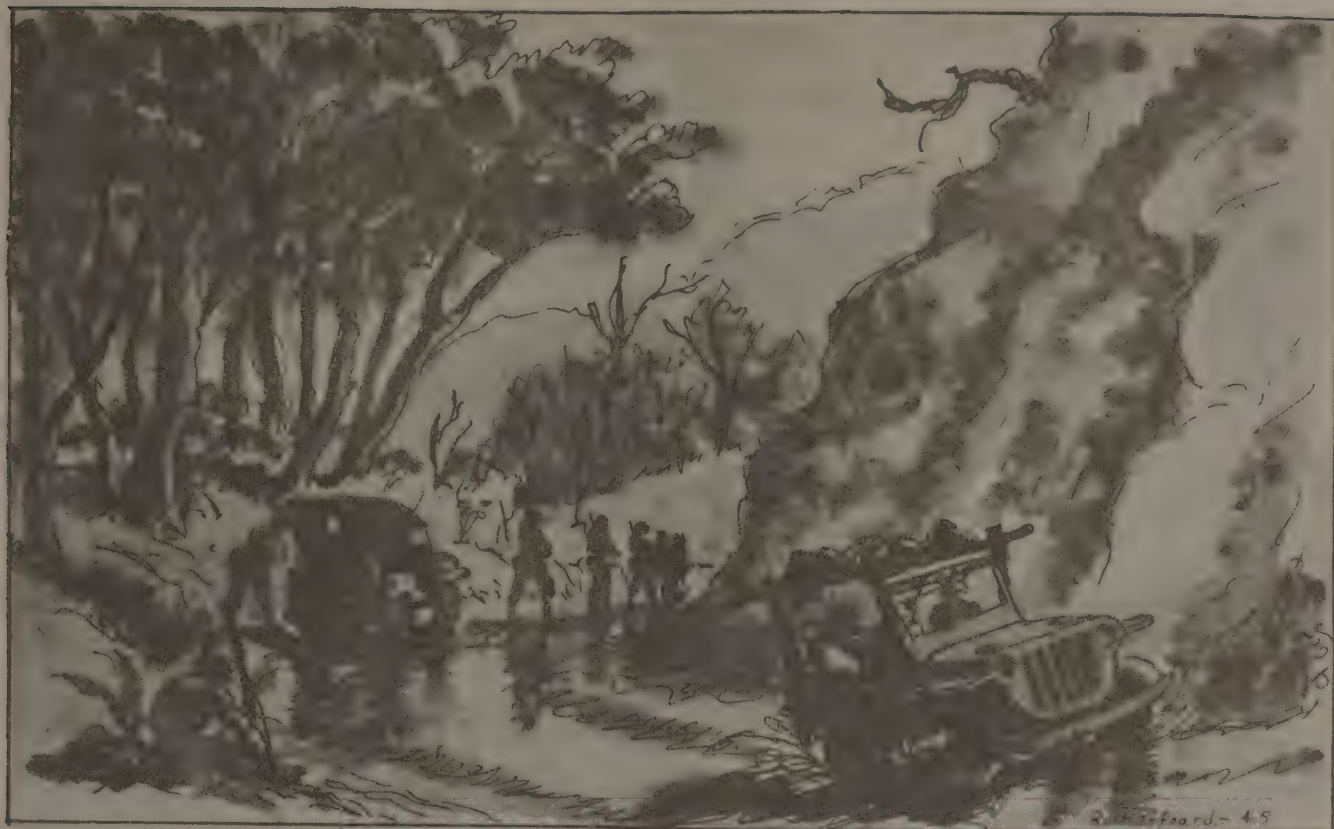
until death .



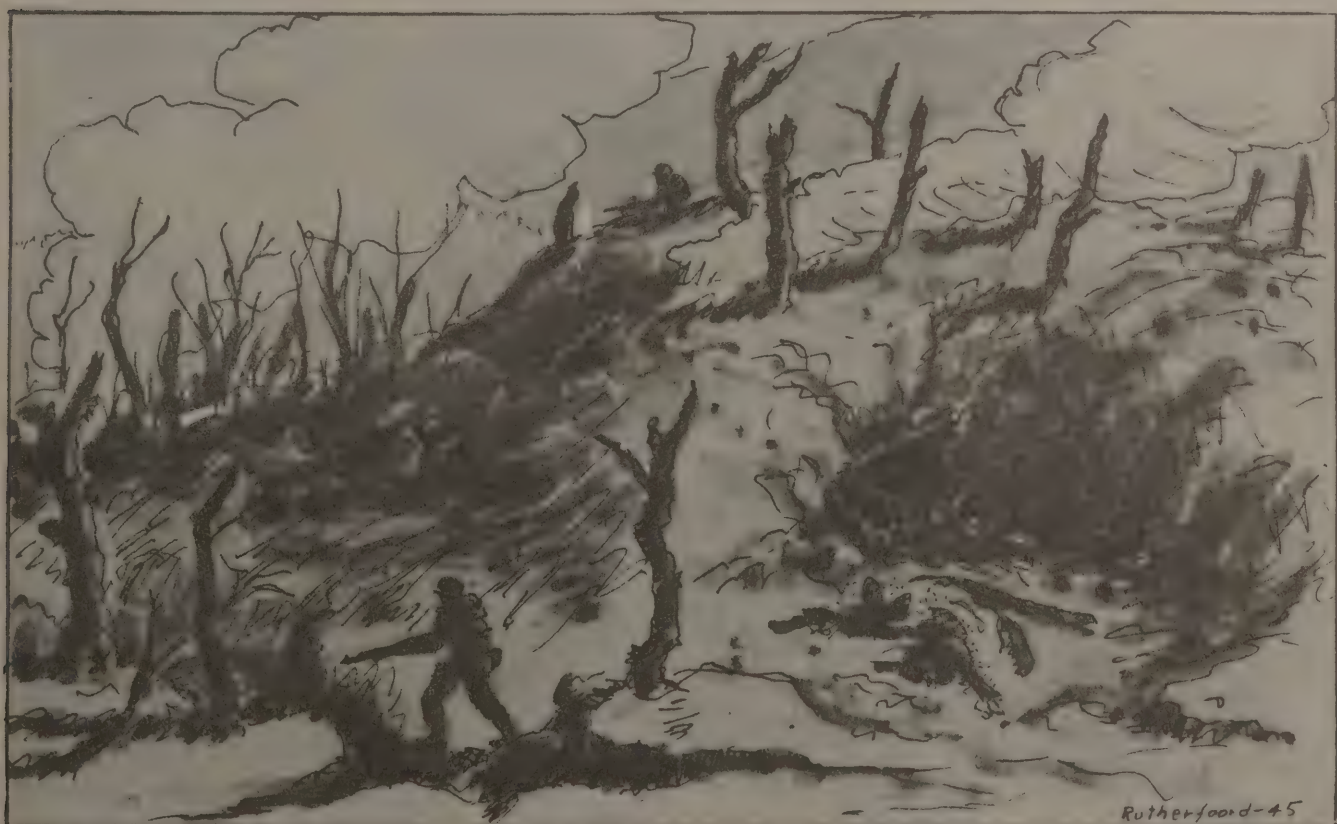
Those of the enemy who were in such a pitiful state from wounds and beri-beri that they could neither fight, retreat, nor take their own lives, were taken prisoner. They were fortunate.



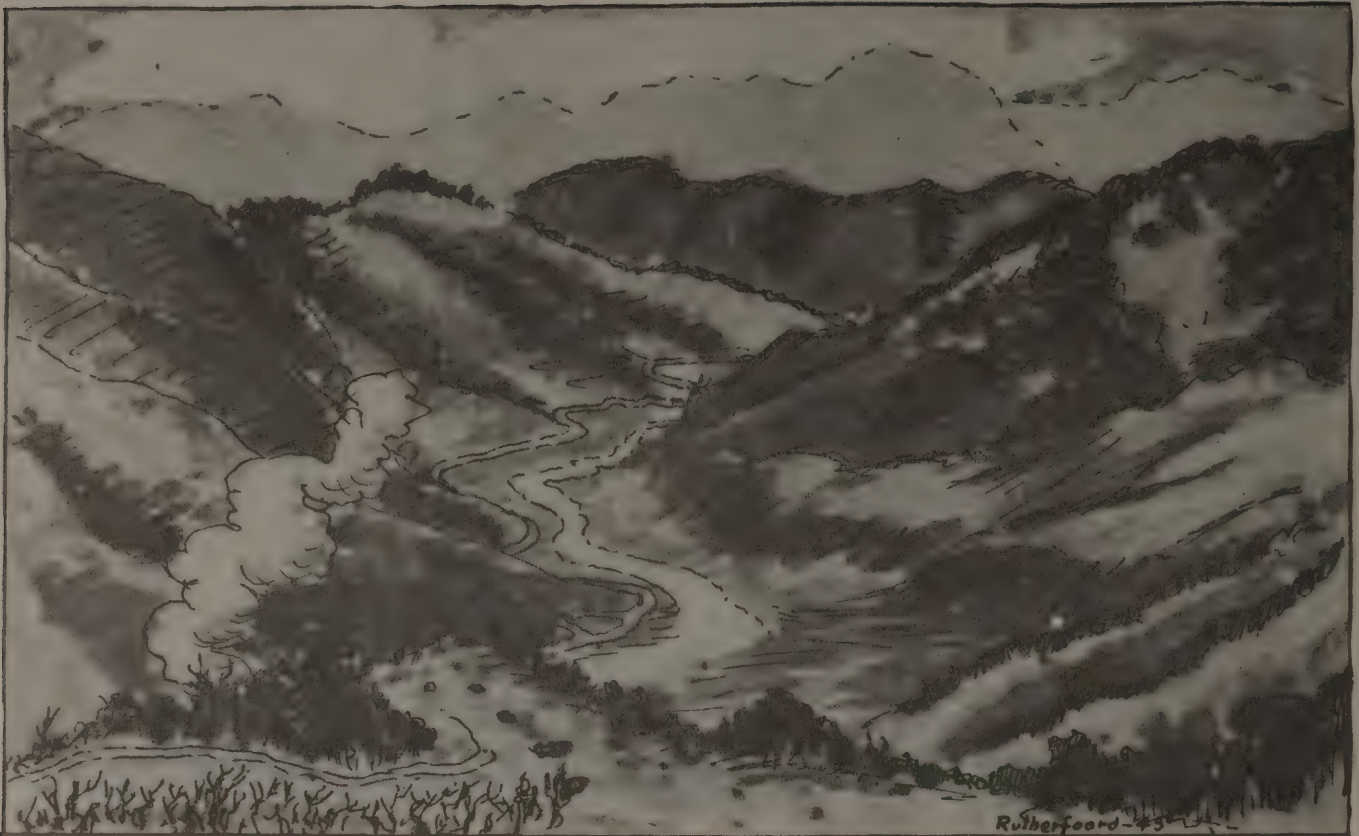
We continued to receive artillery from Bolong, Santa Fe, and the Villa Verde Trail although we now held the dominating terrain all along the line.



It was downhill to Bolong, but the Japs were still in prepared positions, and Americans continued to pay the price of war with their blood.



There was an artillery field piece hidden in a cave on Bolong which cost the United States Government one million dollars before we could destroy it.



From Wolfhound Ridge we saw "K" Company of the 35th cleaning out the last enemy on Bolong. The Cagayan Valley lay beyond,



and we had "grandstand seats"



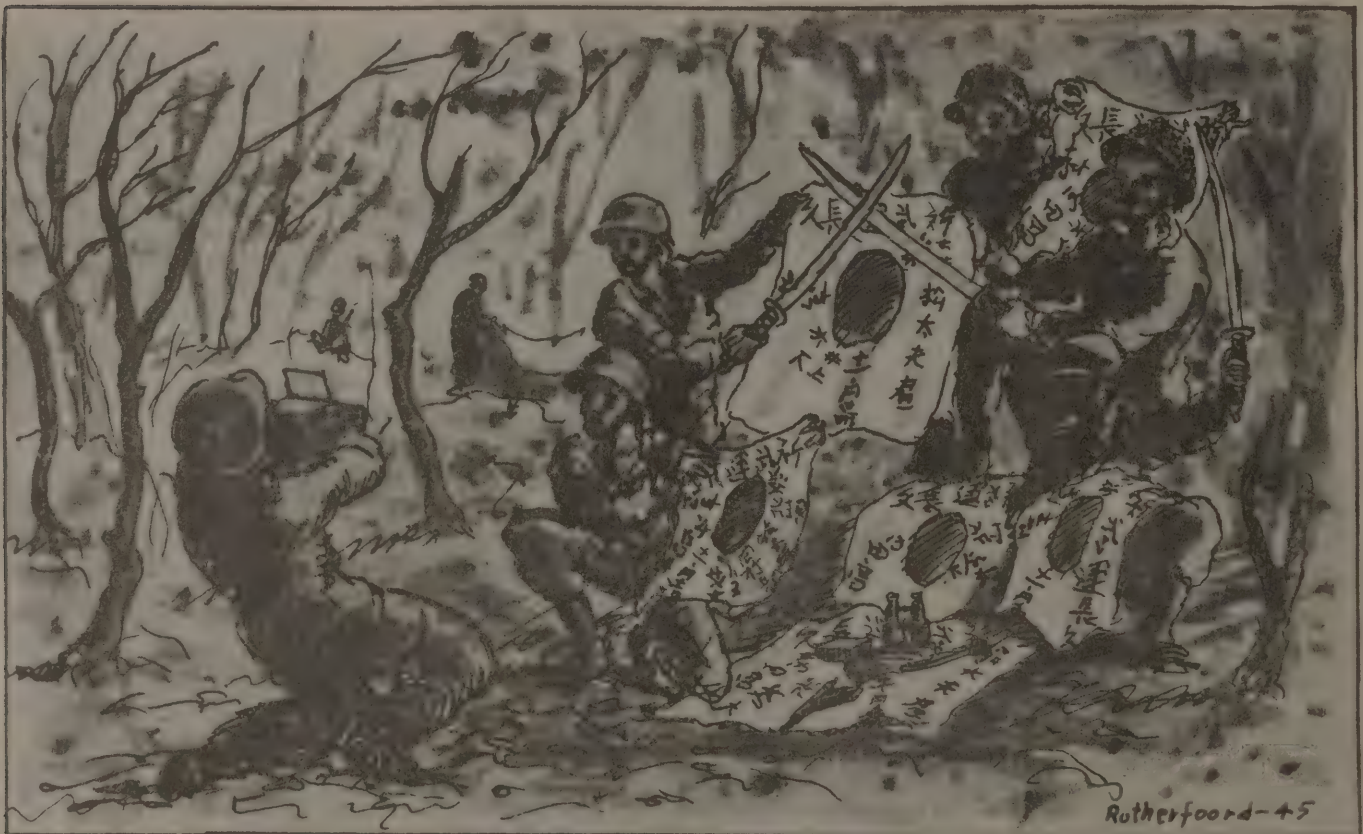
for the Napalm bombing of Santa Fe , and the Villa Verde Trail .



I visited "K" Company of the 35th to watch our troops close in on Santa Fe , the gateway to the Cagayan Valley, and the final objective of the 25th Division.



Mail was taken to the men in the lines where ever , and when ever it was possible .



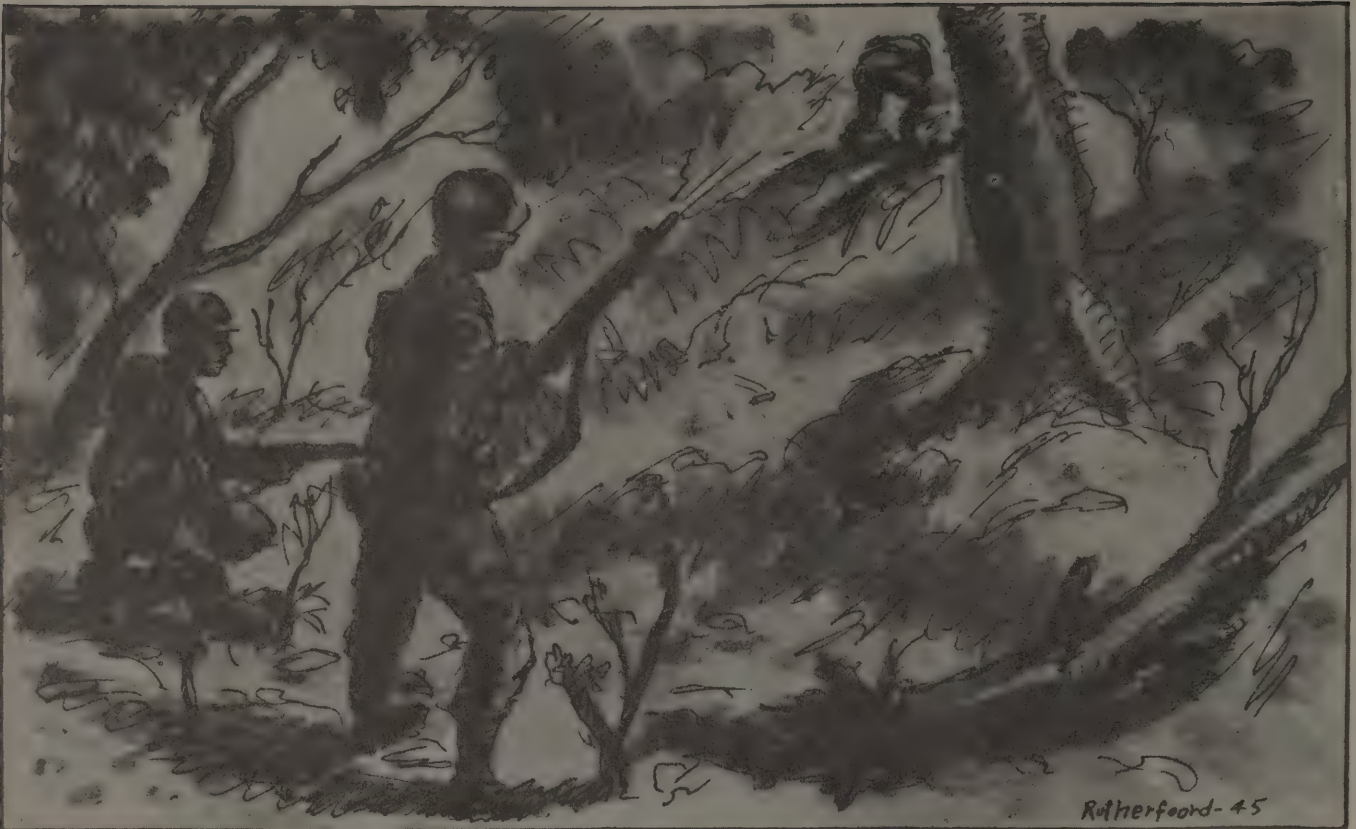
War Correspondents were received good-naturedly by the men on Bolong , because most people like to pose for a cameraman , or get their names in print .



At last Santa Fe was open to traffic, and the stage was set for an American drive down the Cagayan Valley to the north.



The 25th Division was then given the job of securing the highway,



and cleaning out all of the pocketed Japs in the Santa Fe , Villa Verde area



We began to capture more prisoners of war than we had ever seen at one time before .



After one hundred and sixtyfive consecutive days of combat, we were relieved, and the doughboys began their long journey



to Camp Patrick for a much needed "rest".



Each white cross and each Star of David at Santa Barbara marked the grave of a man whose most fervent desire had been to go home, where he could live in the dignity of freedom.



So it was with mixed emotions that we left them there, and headed for the transports, and Japan.

